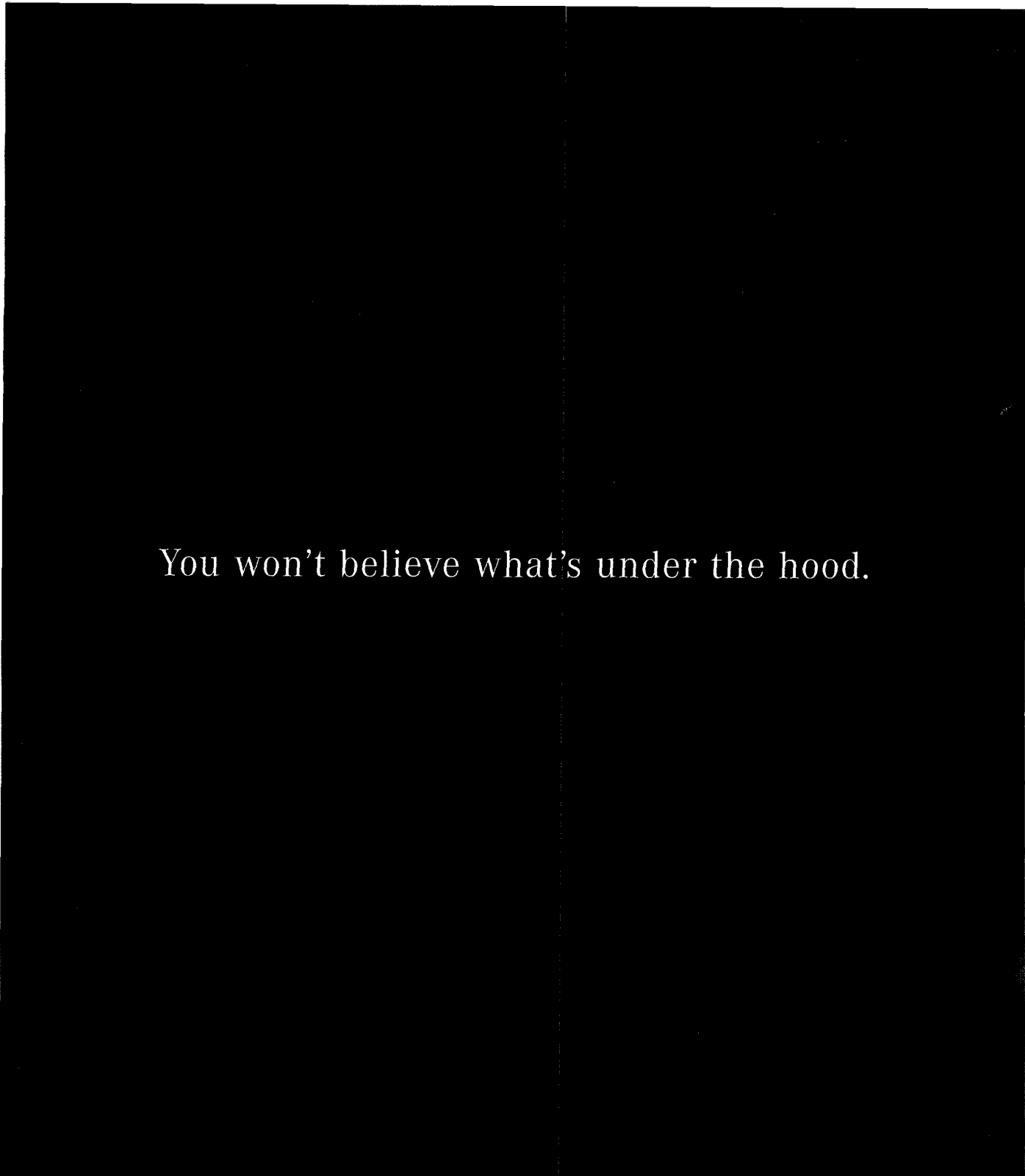


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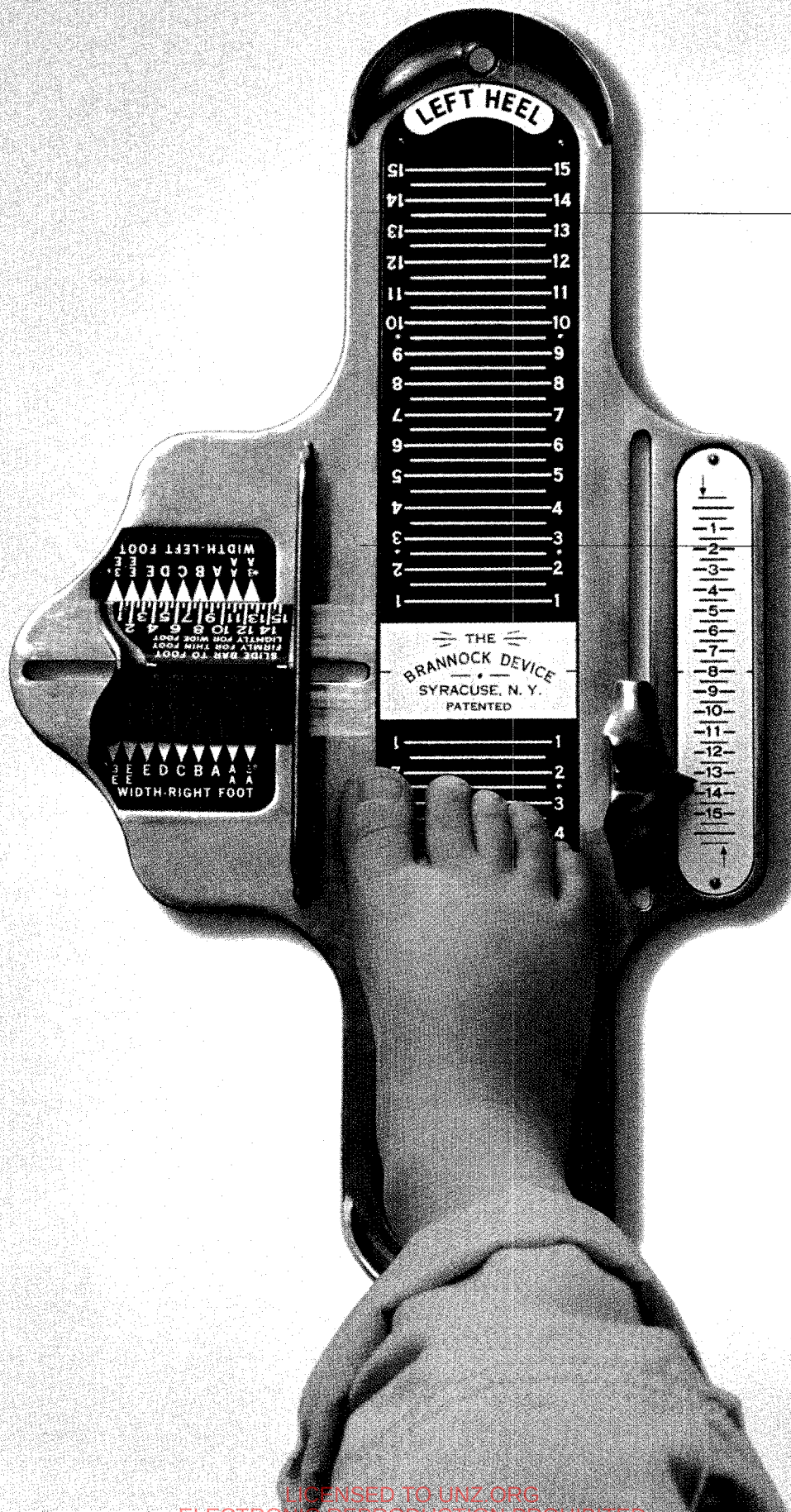


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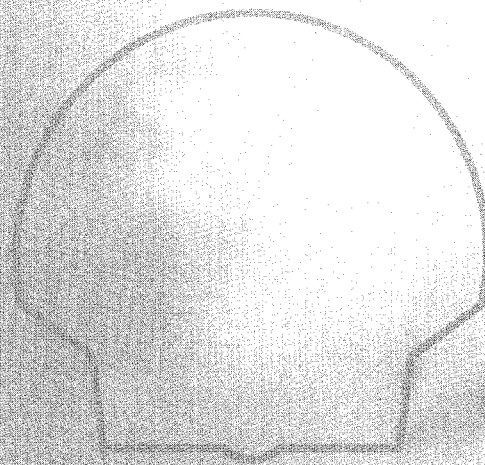
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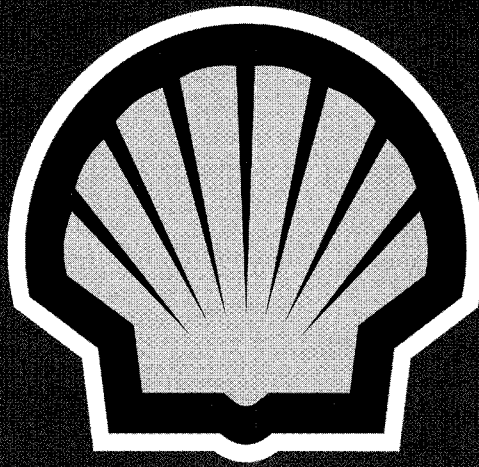
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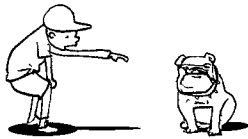


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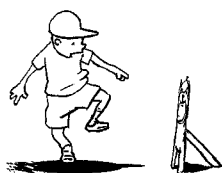
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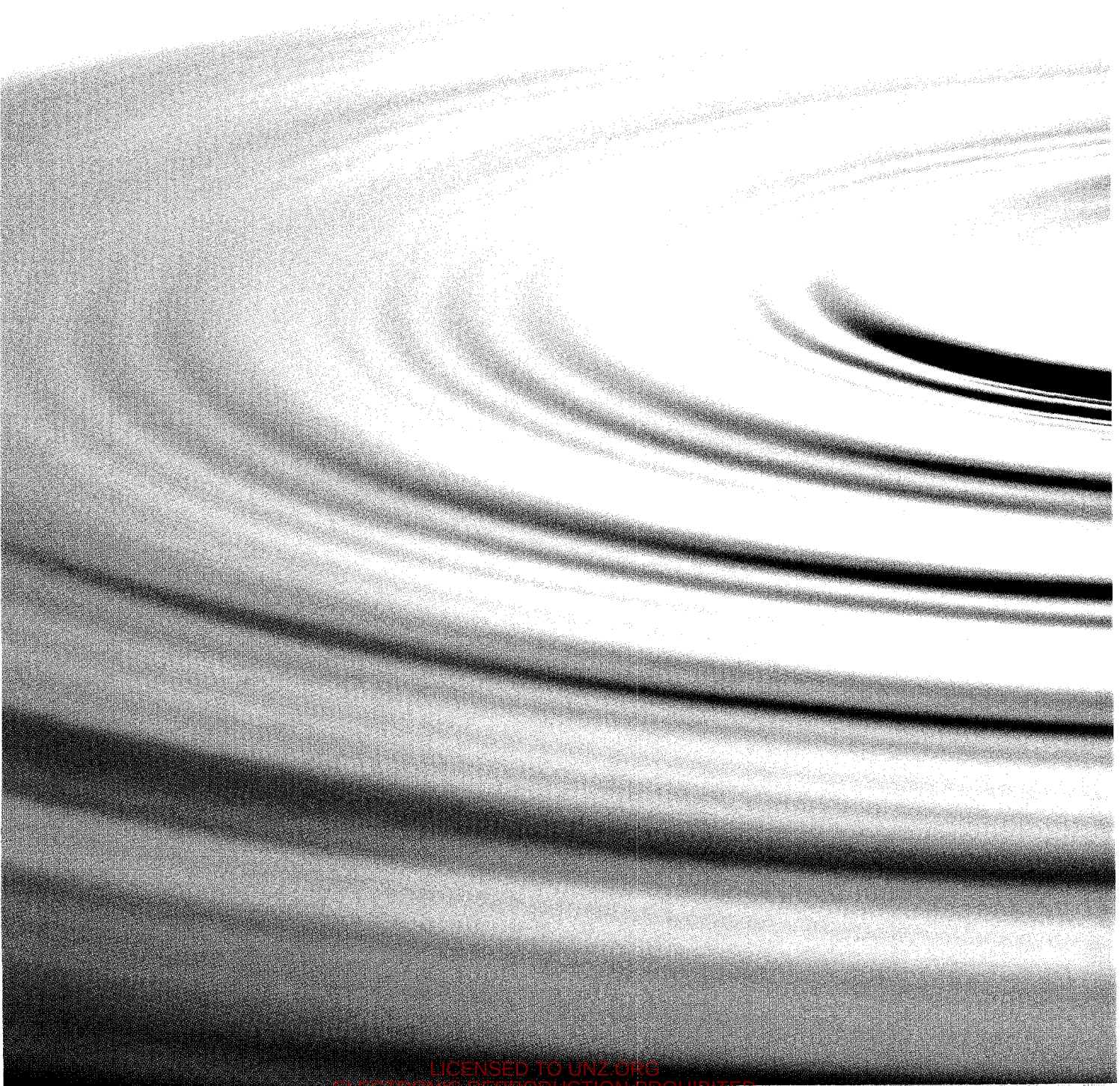
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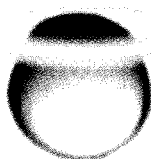
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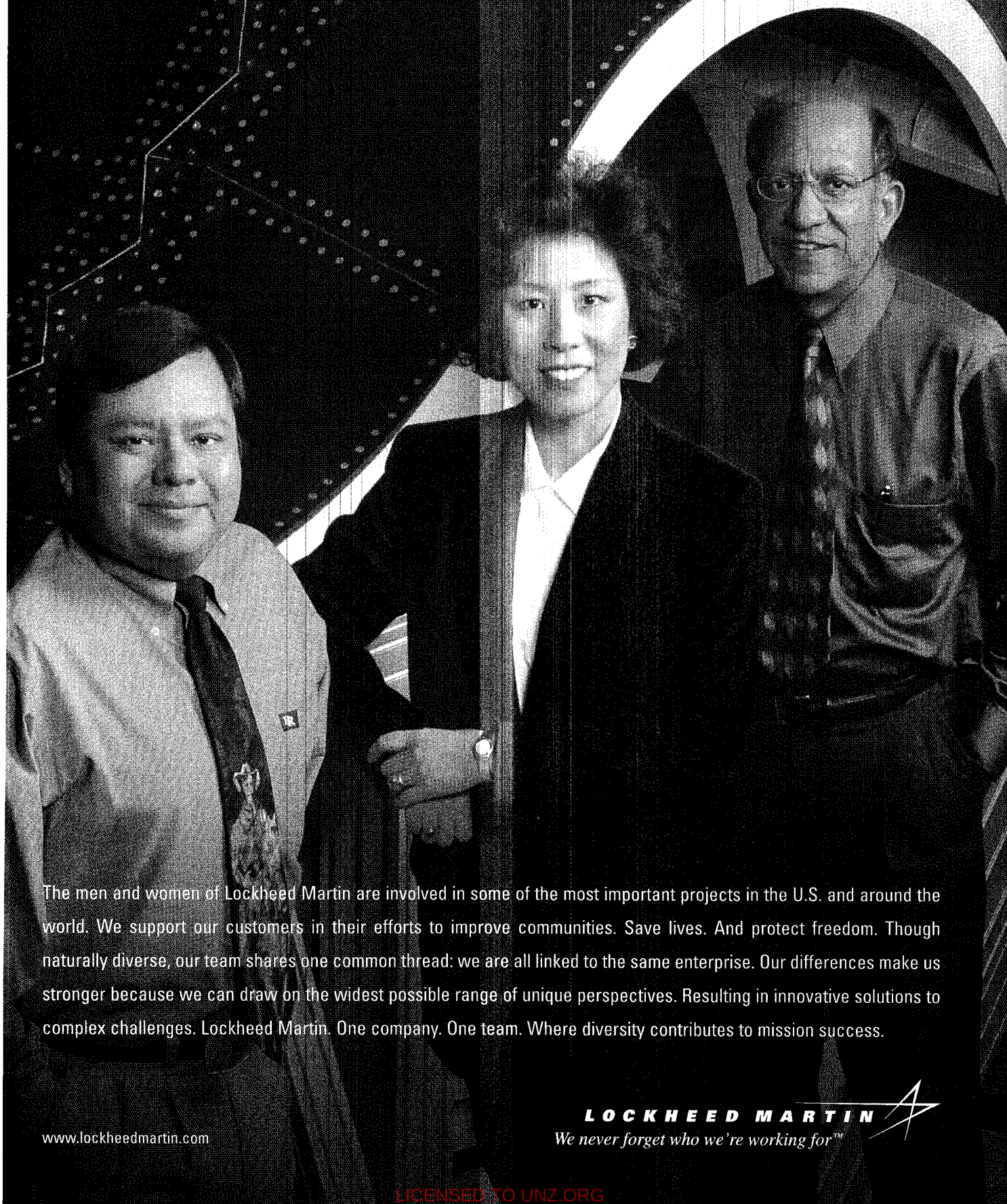
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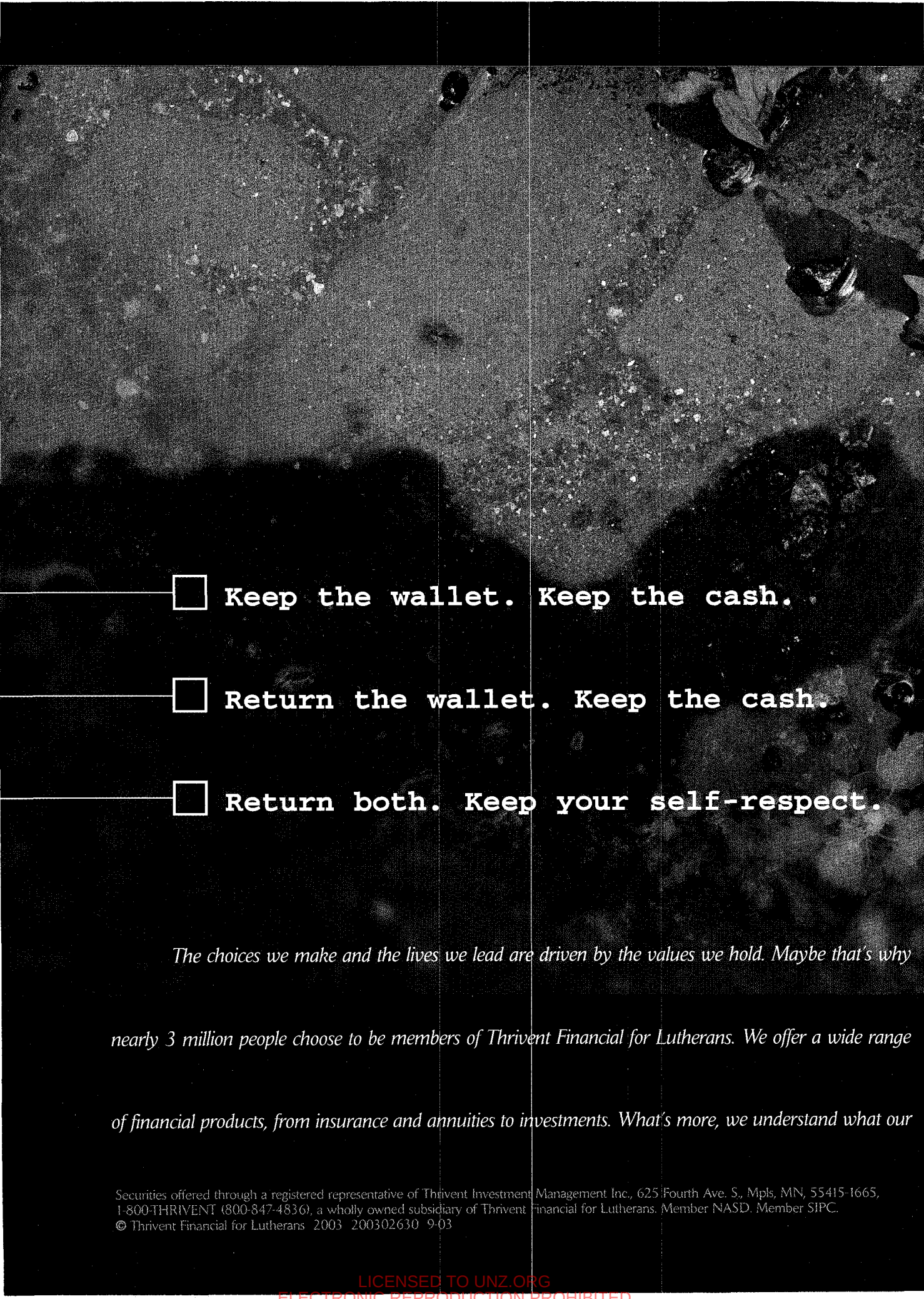
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Dark Art of Interrogation

Mark Bowden ("The Dark Art of Interrogation," October *Atlantic*) is right to say that "as it happens, a pertinent case study exists" (referring to Israel). No democracy has been more frequently stalked by terrorists than Israel, and Israel's response for a time included the use of "moderate physical pressure" in "ticking-bomb" cases. Bowden neglects to say where the Israelis' experiment with legalized torture led.

Israeli courts allowed a practice called *tiltulim* in Hebrew. In applying *tiltulim*, the interrogator seizes the prisoner by the shoulders and shakes him. (He can't grab the prisoner by the lapels, because it causes whiplash.) No pain is involved, the interrogators assure; this is just a means to establish "psychological domination."

Before long a Palestinian prisoner died after being shaken. The pathologist said the brain had bled from bruising against the skull—the way an infant dies from shaken-baby syndrome. Editorials about the incident appeared in Israeli papers, and there was an article in *The New York Times*; the attorney general of Israel declared that the legal limits must be respected.

A short while later the head of Shin Bet, the secret security services, called a press conference. (This was remarkable, because under Israeli security laws the name of the head of Shin Bet cannot appear in print.) He began by apologizing to the families of five people whose bodies had been shredded in a blast on a bus. He said he had had the bomb builder in custody seventy-two hours before the blast, but that he had failed to question him severely enough to get the information that would have saved those lives. The reason he had failed was that man over there—and he pointed at the attorney general. But in making his case

against the attorney general, the Shin Bet chief slipped badly: he said his agency's methods could not be torture, since only one death had occurred in 8,000 cases.

An inquiry, however, revealed that more like 20,000 such interrogations had occurred, and more than one death—probably at least three (see Human Rights Watch and U.S. Department of State country reports). As the evidence accumulated, it became clear that Shin Bet had rarely been investigating ticking-bomb plots; it had been neutralizing threatening people.

The shaking, which continued for hours and typically came after nearly three weeks of softening up by "stress and duress methods," was only incidentally about information gathering. (Information extracted by torture is unreliable anyway, as Bowden points out, since the victim will say whatever the torturer wants to hear.) Rather, it was about making the suspects into damaged goods.

Therapists who treat people who have been tortured say they are never trusted again by their former associates, because they are assumed to have broken under pressure and to have yielded up names, dates, and places. Even more important, they are *themselves* incapable of trust, of optimism, of self-confidence, of dealing with authority, in some cases even of being in crowds. They emerge depressed, solitary, reclusive. They are neutered as leaders.

On the other hand, some will likely make good suicide bombers.

Stephen Wrage  
U.S. Naval Academy  
Annapolis, Md.

Your excellent article "The Dark Art of Interrogation" was marred by a glaring oversight: what if the individuals being tortured aren't guilty? Torture suffers from the same issue as capital

punishment: it may be morally justified if you are certain of the facts—but you never are.

William Rosenfeld  
Lexington, Mass.

I enjoyed reading "The Dark Art of Interrogation," but found its premise inherently contradictory. There is no question that under threat of violence or actual violence a suspect will ultimately say whatever is necessary to prevent torture or make the pain stop, even if it is misleading or a lie. And as human beings, we can confidently assume that once an interrogator hears what he wants, he will be satisfied, thus promoting the illusion of truth in the suspect's statement. Knowing this, contrary to Mark Bowden's argument, there is no incentive to take the slippery slope of torture. The only question in my mind is how to adequately screen out potential interrogators with sadistic tendencies and adequately train interrogators in successful practices.

Bowden doesn't mention the common practice of handing over suspected terrorists to a third-party government, such as Syria's, for interrogation—a practice that both makes the United States culpable in the routine torture of prisoners and results in information that is inherently problematic.

Incidentally, Bowden mistakenly refers to the *Kubark Manual*. The correct title is *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation*. For those interested, "KU" was a digraph used by the CIA in the 1960s to refer to a general covert operation or intelligence program, typically in a specific country. "BARK" is the specific name of the project.

Further, the CIA document was written specifically for interrogations of professional intelligence officers, not terrorists. Since the motivations, weaknesses, and dedication of terrorists are



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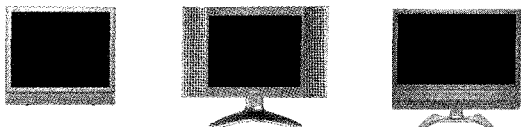


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qualitatively different from those of intelligence officers, we should recognize that the techniques in the *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* document may or may not apply to the current problem of captive terrorists.

Finally, given the highly compartmentalized nature of CIA operations, we should not assume that this “manual” was widely known to exist within the CIA, much less widely used.

*Paul Cooke*  
*The Woodlands, Tex.*

Mark Bowden does a fine job of covering the landscape of torture (as far as we can know). I think he could have avoided a conclusion (in the last few sentences of his piece) and settled on ambiguity. The problem with allowing torture or its kissing cousin, coercion, is that it invites copying. If we, for instance, copy the techniques of Shabak, we are on a slippery slope. The Israelis may trumpet the success of their tactics, but they have brought a plague of suicide attacks upon themselves. Caleb Carr, in his excellent little book *The Lessons of Terror*, concludes that war against civilian targets is always counterproductive. He is discussing the tactics of war, but the same principles may be applied to the treatment of prisoners. We can know the efficacy of our interrogation tactics only after the fact. So innocent prisoners will bear the same fate as the guilty. The officially ambiguous Guantánamo detainees have seen justice delayed for two years. Any information they may have had is stale to interrogators by now. Could it be that long detention for no cause is the ultimate weapon of mass deterrence? We should all be alarmed—particularly when Secretary Rumsfeld considers any criticism of President Bush to be tantamount to support for the terrorists.

*J. Russell Tyldesley*  
*Catonville, Md.*

As a retired CIA case officer, an ex-newspaperman, and an *Atlantic* subscriber, I find it hard to believe that Mark Bowden’s remark “Most CIA agents, especially by the 1980s, were just deskmen” made it past the copy desk.

Bowden owes an apology to the

many hundreds of Agency case officers who, in the 1980s and before and after, worked the streets and jungles of Central America, serviced the dead drops in Eastern Europe, and roamed the hell-holes of the Near East. Far outnumbering those who supported us from the Washington, D.C., area, we rode in helicopters and drove cars and jeeps, not desks. And we weren’t then, and aren’t now, called “agents,” except by the uninformed or by commentators in need of a hot-button word; the term properly refers to those recruited by an intelligence agency for espionage or propaganda purposes. But Bowden must know that.

Bowden errs again when he writes that the Agency’s “knuckle-draggers” belonged to the “Investigation and Analysis Directorate.” The name is not only improbable (“knuckle-draggers” are action-oriented paramilitary operatives, not analysts) but bogus. No division so named ever existed.

*James A. Smith*  
*Fernandina Beach, Fla.*

Mark Bowden quotes an unnamed “retired Special Forces officer” as saying, “I’ll tell you how to make a man talk. You shoot the man to his left and the man to his right. Then you can’t shut him up.”

At the Winter Soldier Investigation, a hearing into the U.S. government’s policies of torture in Vietnam, which was held in Detroit in April of 1971 by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, American veterans of the war testified that captured Vietcong were made to provide information to their interrogators by taking them for “half a helicopter ride.” Two or three prisoners would be taken to a great height in a helicopter, and one or two of them would be thrown out. The remaining one or two would then talk nonstop. Testimony at the hearing revealed that such murders and torture were sanctioned or ordered by ranking officers and amounted to military policy. (The Winter Soldier Investigation was the subject of a prizewinning documentary and was read into the *Congressional Record*. See Winter Soldier Web sites.)

*Richard Bird*  
*Hampton, N.J.*

#### **Mark Bowden replies:**

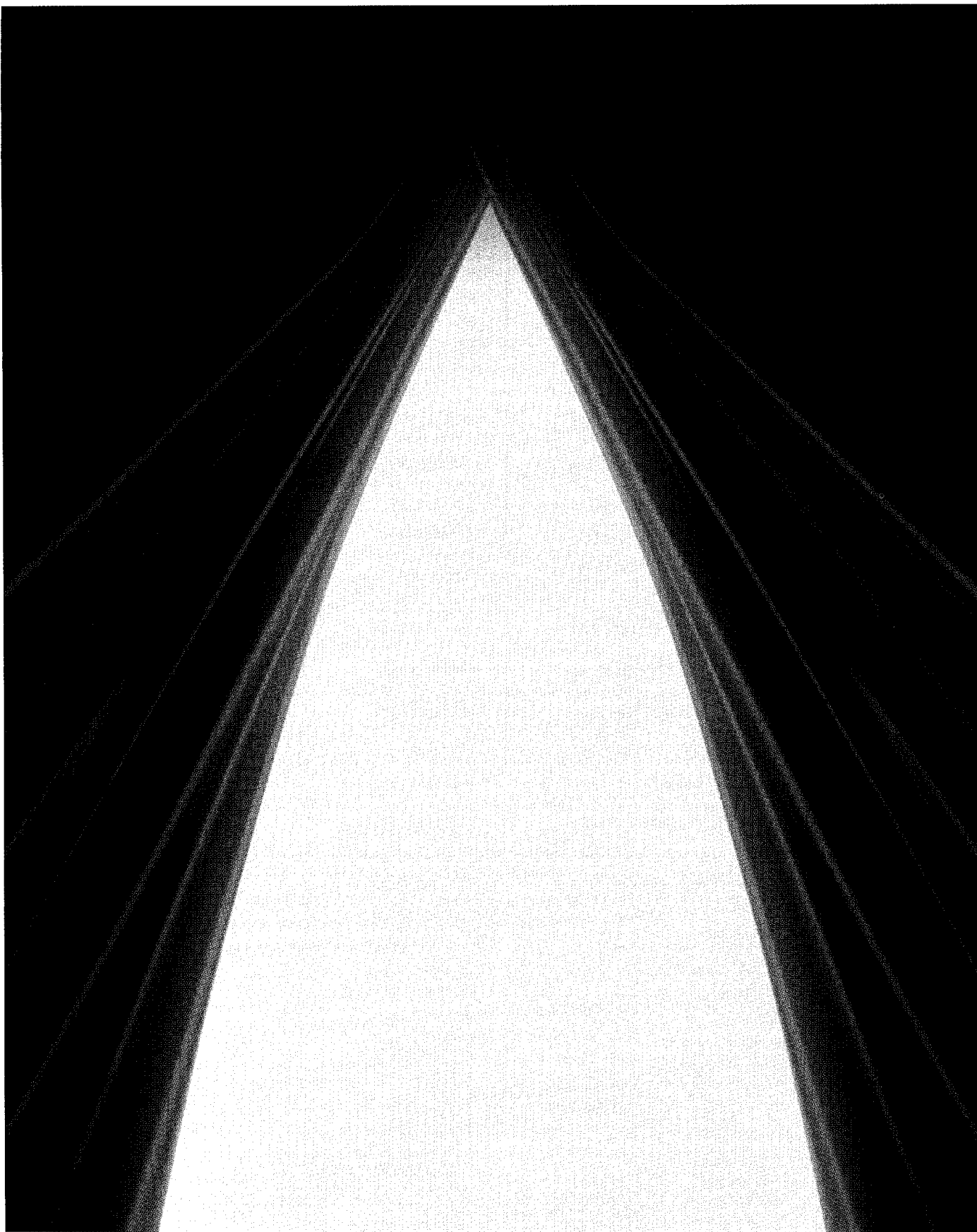
*Stephen Wrage provides a good description of one kind of abuse that, as I wrote, led the Israeli Supreme Court to ban coercion in 1999, after a decade-long experiment with it.*

*William Rosenfeld writes to defend the presumption of innocence, which all right-thinking people endorse, but which in the entire history of warfare has never prevented a captured enemy soldier’s being harshly questioned. Prisoners of war or “enemy combatants” are not citizens charged with a crime; they are presumed to be members of an organization at war with our country. If a perfectly innocent bystander is mistakenly arrested, then rigorous questioning followed up by careful investigation ought to reveal that fact fairly quickly. Personally, I would prefer it to languishing indefinitely at Camp X-Ray.*

*Paul Cooke ignores the importance I placed on rapid, thorough follow-up investigation of subjects undergoing interrogation. The art consists not only of asking questions but also of quickly verifying or disproving what a subject says. Verifiable information is rewarded; lies are punished. In the absence of investigation, as Mr. Cooke points out, a subject can simply feed his tormentors what they want to hear. This scenario has little relevance to intelligence gathering. It makes sense only in the context of a criminal investigation, where lazy, corrupt, or incompetent investigators are intent on wringing confessions or incriminating testimony from captured suspects. The point of intelligence interrogation, which seeks to thwart pending attacks or to unravel a terrorist organization, is to learn new, verifiable information. So the interrogator and the investigator must work hand in hand. Mr. Cooke kindly provides the official title for what I refer to as the Kubark Manual, a CIA how-to on the art of interrogation. I have no way of telling how “widely known” this document was inside the CIA, but it was familiar to all the former agents I interviewed, and it is, to my knowledge, the most complete survey of such methodology in print. It’s pretty well written, too.*

*J. Russell Tyldesley writes of concern for the inmates at Camp X-Ray. Most are still being held, as I understand it, not for intelligence-gathering purposes but to prevent them from furthering their jihad by rejoining cadres bent on carrying out murderous attacks. He is wrong in supposing that it is possible to “know the efficacy of our inter-*





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*rogation tactics only after the fact." Skillful interrogation is a process, one that does not involve severe acts of torture, although it is helpful if that fear is present. Information obtained through coercion can be checked out, and the subject's conditions can improve or worsen accordingly. The interrogation process, if well conducted, ought to uncover mistaken arrests quite rapidly. This is a far cry from lopping off body parts. It would be regrettable if an innocent person were suspected of being part of a terrorist organization and, because of that suspicion, were kept awake and uncomfortable for a period of time; but given the stakes, I don't regard such treatment as especially cruel or unusual.*

*I am grateful to James Smith for pointing out my error in naming the CIA unit that employed Keith Hall. The initials IAD stood for "International Activities Division." The line about most CIA agents' holding desk jobs reflected, I'm afraid, Hall's bias against case officers, who no doubt, as Mr. Smith argues, were considerably more active than the line suggests. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for their service.*

### Frankenfood

Jonathan Rauch seems to ignore two salient points in his article on genetically modified crops, "Will Frankenfood Save the Planet?" (October *Atlantic*). First, what informs many environmentalists' doubts about this latest cure-all is not only a well-reasoned (contrary to Rauch's flippant dismissal of it as reactionary politics) suspicion of markets and artificial substances (recent history is littered with tragic examples of the failures of both) but also a logical suspicion of the flawed technologies for which we have an insatiable appetite, ironically looking to each new one to undo the horrors wrought by the last. Second, does it not occur to Rauch that simple adjustments in Western appetites and patterns of consumption could have just as significant an impact on the world food supply as this quest for the high-yield holy grail—without the frightening collateral damage? It strikes me that Rauch has adopted the Bush Administration's short-sighted attitude toward the conservation of resources. His article epitomizes our collective pref-

erence for philosophies and technologies that allow us to ignore our own culpability and responsibility. Given the choice, however false it may be, between addressing the underlying systemic problem and deferring to the next great magic bullet, we always seem to choose the bullet and then wonder how we got shot.

*Andrew DeGraves  
Kalamazoo, Mich.*

As a practicing organic farmer, I found that Jonathan Rauch gives short shrift to sustainable organic farming: he dismisses organic methods as "using a lot of manure, which can pollute water and contaminate food."

We grow 240 acres of organically certified wheat, corn, and soybeans here in Wisconsin without the benefit of any animal waste. This is done with crop rotation and by planting "green manure" crops such as red clover and rye, which both enhance fertility and foil crop pests. For those certified organic farmers who do employ animal agriculture, the National Organic Program standards mandate that uncomposted raw manure must be incorporated into the soil at least 120 days prior to any crop harvest, which prevents any contamination of crops growing or harvested for either animal or human consumption and prevents manure runoff into streams and groundwater.

Rauch also claims that ploughing releases greenhouse gases. Any greenhouse gases released by ploughing to kill weeds and to create a seedbed for crops are recycled by subsequent crops. It is the burning of fossil fuels, not the tillage of the soil, that causes global warming.

Ironically, biotechnology and herbicide-dependent no-till farming methods have inadvertently promoted the organic industry in recent years, by creating consumer resistance to food produced by genetic manipulation and toxic chemicals spread onto growing fields. No one walks into a grocery store with a preference for food that has been produced with chemicals, and when the consumer sees an organic alternative on the shelf next to its chemical brethren, often the organic version is bought. This is why organic sales have

increased by 20 percent a year for the past seven or eight years, making organic the fastest-growing sector of American agriculture.

Rauch's larger point, that biotechnology must feed the hungry multitudes of the future, is merely a prescription for future corporate profits on the part of Monsanto et al. Worldwide use of biotechnology will require worldwide dependence on genetically modified seed and herbicides, which are available only from companies that hold patents on same. Farmers cannot keep this seed for future planting. They will be forced to buy new seed from the same suppliers year after year, and to pay whatever price is asked—prolonging Third World poverty.

Furthermore, high crop yields, whether from genetically modified or traditional hybrids, are a function of timely planting, favorable weather, proper fertilization, and timely harvest. If any of these basic elements is not optimal, yields will be disappointing and people could still go hungry. The only certainty under this scenario is that multinational biotech companies will reap big profits. I do agree with Rauch regarding using genetically modified crops that have been bred to tolerate soils contaminated with high levels of salt and/or aluminum. If these soils can be reclaimed for food production, so much the better.

Feeding the people of the future will require a multifaceted approach to agriculture: biotechnology is only one of many ways in which the farming of the future will be conducted, and relying on biotechnology alone would be extremely dangerous and foolhardy.

*Mike Peters  
Sharon, Wis.*

When an article like Jonathan Rauch's posits a technological solution to world hunger, I feel compelled to point out that modern famine is a structural problem—an issue of food distribution, not of undersupply. Despite all the advances in agricultural technology over the past thirty years, structural problems in the world's food-distribution system have caused terrible famines in Bangladesh, Ethiopia,



and elsewhere. The monetary costs of integrating new agricultural technologies into subsistence-based agricultural systems often exacerbate this problem. Suddenly people cannot afford their food anymore. The nation of Zambia compellingly illustrates the various considerations that developing countries face when struggling with food-technology decisions, and may offer an excellent example of how best to move forward.

When, in September of 2002, Zambia declared that it would not accept genetically modified American crops as famine relief for the millions of its citizens facing starvation, a great outcry ensued from U.S. relief organizations. Irrational fear of poisoned food was the way the issue was trivialized by Zambian politicians and American agribusiness alike, yet a careful reading of the Zambian government's position reveals that its motivation was to prevent the distribution of genetically modified food without more careful consideration of the impacts—financial, agricultural, and otherwise.

Adopting genetically modified crops transforms agricultural technology in the adoptive country, with all the attendant increases in capital and manufacturing costs. Like many of their Green Revolution predecessors, genetically modified crops have substantial irrigation and fertilization needs. Some of these fertilizers even act as a form of patent control: genetically modified crops will not express their genetically enhanced characteristics until certain trigger fertilizers are applied. The costs of these fertilizers, and of the genetically modified seed itself, are high. In Zambia, where 85 percent of the population is involved in subsistence agriculture, only the largest industrial farms can afford to farm genetically modified crops.

Zambian leaders had every reason last September to believe that portions of genetically modified maize distributed as famine relief to individual families would be set aside for planting in the upcoming year. Under the pressure of averting a food crisis, Zambia faced the potential of inadvertently adopting genetically modified crops as subsistence crops. The specter of this uncontrolled distribution raised the possibility of los-

ing the "GM-free" designation that Zambian products enjoy in European Union markets. The EU is Zambia's main export partner, and it does not readily accept imports of genetically modified foods.

Zambia's decision to reject genetically modified foods protected the stability of the government's relationship with its largest trading partner and shielded its small farmers from exponential increases in their food-production costs.

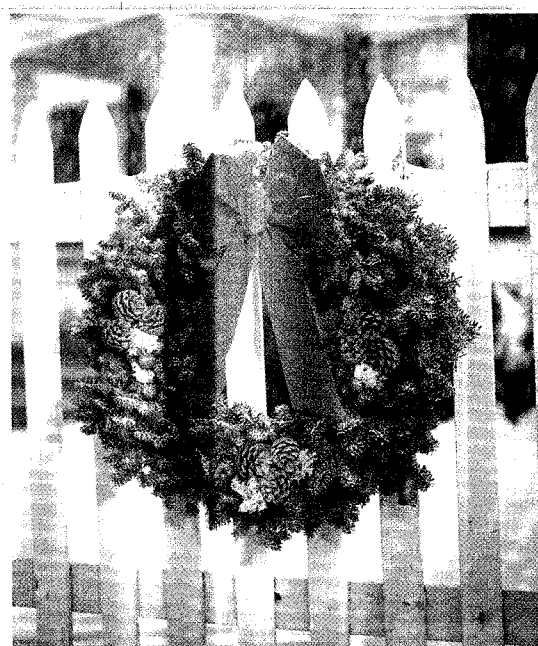
On April 11 of this year *The Zambian Times* proudly reported that very few people had died of undernourishment in the fall of 2002, despite the government's rejection of genetically modified famine relief. More than 30,000 tons of non-genetically modified food, primarily from the EU, was bought and distributed throughout the country. The world's market contained plenty of food to feed Zambia's hungry population.

Zambia illustrates how the effective application of government and nongovernment resources, careful planning, and efficient food distribution can prevent a terrible human tragedy. It shows that increasing worldwide crop yields is simply not a pressing need; improving distribution is. The only community arguing otherwise is that community of corporations attempting to create demand for their genetically modified products in order to recoup their development costs. Absent this pressing need, the independent scientific community has plenty of time to test the downstream effects of genetically modified foods on large-scale ecological and economic systems. These long-term tests are necessary to avoid unintended adverse consequences and to build world confidence in this useful but not well understood technology.

Jason Ryan  
Quincy, Mass.

I have historically sung the praises of *The Atlantic Monthly* for its investigative journalism, so I was extremely surprised by the lack of balance represented by Jonathan Rauch's article in the October issue. The tone and content of Rauch's article, however, are nothing new.

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(rBGH), approximately ten years ago, the biotechnology industry has been attempting to sell the public on the environmental benefits of novel plants, animals, and drugs. More recently, because of the exponential growth of the organic marketplace (in part a direct result of consumers' looking for GE-free alternatives), this cartel of agribusiness giants has felt compelled to invest in a systematic and relentless effort to undermine the credibility of organic farming. At the forefront of this attack on organics is the Hudson Institute, which, along with its agricultural director and his son, is coincidentally the centerpiece of the article in question.

The Hudson Institute, financed by Monsanto, DuPont, and other biotechnology powerhouses, has relentlessly attacked organic agriculture, accusing this sustainable form of farming of endangering the health of consumers and damaging the environment, and even labeling it a "fraud."

As Rauch and his interviewees sing the praises of genetically modified soybeans, corn, wheat, and cotton, engineered either to resist proprietary herbicides that would normally kill them or to have pesticides built right into the plants, they fail to look at farming as a holistic system, in terms of both the environmental and the socioeconomic fallout from the application of this capital-intensive technology.

First, they do not address some grave environmental and health risks. The use of Roundup Ready crops has required an exponential increase in the use of glyphosate-based pesticides worldwide. What are the implications of this trend? A growing body of literature seriously questions the safety of this material's entering the environment. Glyphosate and one of its breakdown products, AMPA, are turning up in drinking water. Critics are concerned that there is a link between cancer—including non-Hodgkin's lymphoma—and glyphosate. Just this fall Denmark became the first country to impose a ban on glyphosate, which is likely to cause additional scrutiny of this chemical by the European Union.

Aside from the potential risks to human and environmental health, the economic sustainability of Roundup

Ready crops is also being seriously questioned. Because of glyphosate's widespread use, glyphosate resistance is already being seen, creating what farmers refer to as superweeds—weeds able to survive greater and greater applications of this pesticide. As a result, farmers now have to apply even more glyphosate, or mix in additional chemicals, creating an herbicide cocktail, if you will, for application to no-till crops.

The story is similar with corn and cotton that have the toxin-producing gene from *Bacillus thuringiensis*, commonly known as Bt, spliced in. Farmers, including organic producers, have depended on Bt, a naturally occurring bacterium, for spot applications to control a number of pests that destroy crops. But the fear is that conventional and organic farmers are about to lose this tool. Entomologists say that it is a question not of whether but of when the insects that are now so beautifully controlled with Bt will become immune to it. So the long-term effectiveness of genetically engineered Bt crops is very questionable, and farmers not using GE crops will also be forced to switch over to highly toxic synthetic pesticides once resistance develops.

But the most egregious aspect of Rauch's article is that it is so narrowly focused, primarily on reducing soil erosion through no-till farming and cutting back on pesticides that attack just a limited number of critters. The argument Rauch makes—that genetic engineering will address the nutritional needs of large future populations—is specious. This technology is an internal part of the movement toward industrializing all agriculture, worldwide. Fundamentally, if we and our global neighbors do not develop answers to address the population explosion, we will have challenges relating to the carrying capacity of this planet that are more serious than finding enough calories for everyone. Developing countries are quickly burning down rain forests, not in an effort to feed their own populations but, rather, to pay off debt and market cash crops internationally. Promoting sustainable farming practices, like organics, and adequately funding research, which in this country garners only about one percent of the budget, will prove more effective

from both the economic and the social-justice standpoint.

Rauch claims that the trend will be for environmental groups to get on board and support genetically engineered food, but the reality is just the opposite. When the group Waterkeepers Alliance, headed by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and dedicated to preserving the quality of surface water (especially the Chesapeake Bay), decided to partner with farmers in an effort to advance its agenda, it sought not the disciples of Monsanto and high technology but, rather, the 500 members of the nation's largest organic farmers' cooperative, Organic Valley. Waterkeepers understands well that the industrial model for agriculture, in which feed crops are produced in mass quantities in one location and livestock are concentrated on factory farms in another, is a prescription for environmental disaster. The true model for environmental stewardship and economic sustainability for the families involved worldwide is the diversified organic farm, where livestock pasture, cover crops, and perennial forage are incorporated into a crop rotation, and nutrients are recycled.

Rauch had to look long and hard for the isolated "environmentalists" who embrace GE food. Not bothering to interview anyone from the mainstream environmental movement or the organic-farming sector, and instead simply lifting quotations from two Web sites, was disrespectful to those of us who find hope in the marketplace success of organic agriculture.

Mark Alan Kastel  
La Farge, Wis.

#### **Jonathan Rauch replies:**

*Here's the problem: before population growth and protein intake level off, toward the middle of this century, we've got to at least double global food production from existing farmland, or else turn untold acres of prime wilderness and habitat into second-rate cropland. By raising the per-acre productivity of existing fields, and by reducing the need for pesticides, herbicides, ploughing, and other environmental hazards, biotechnology, I argue, will be one of the best friends the environment has, if environmentalists take ownership of it.*



*Given the scale and immediacy of the challenge, calling for "simple adjustments in Western appetites," as Andrew DeGraves does, is mere wishful thinking, and not very relevant given that developing-country appetites are the ones that will need feeding. I agree with Mike Peters that biotech is only one of many tools for grappling with this problem (though I would add that it's a singularly powerful tool). My point is that we'll need all the tools we can get.*

*Advocates of organic farming maintain that their way of farming is better for the environment. Others dispute this. I don't carry a brief on that issue, because there is no need to choose between organic methods and biotechnology. There is plenty of room for both—and for a variety of other promising approaches as well. Owing to its higher cost and lower efficiency, however, organic farming is for the time being a niche player—a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, high-tech methods, and affordable in rich countries. Someday that may change. Meanwhile, biotech is a bridge technology that can help feed the world and save rain forests until we get there.*

*In his eagerness to force a false choice be-*

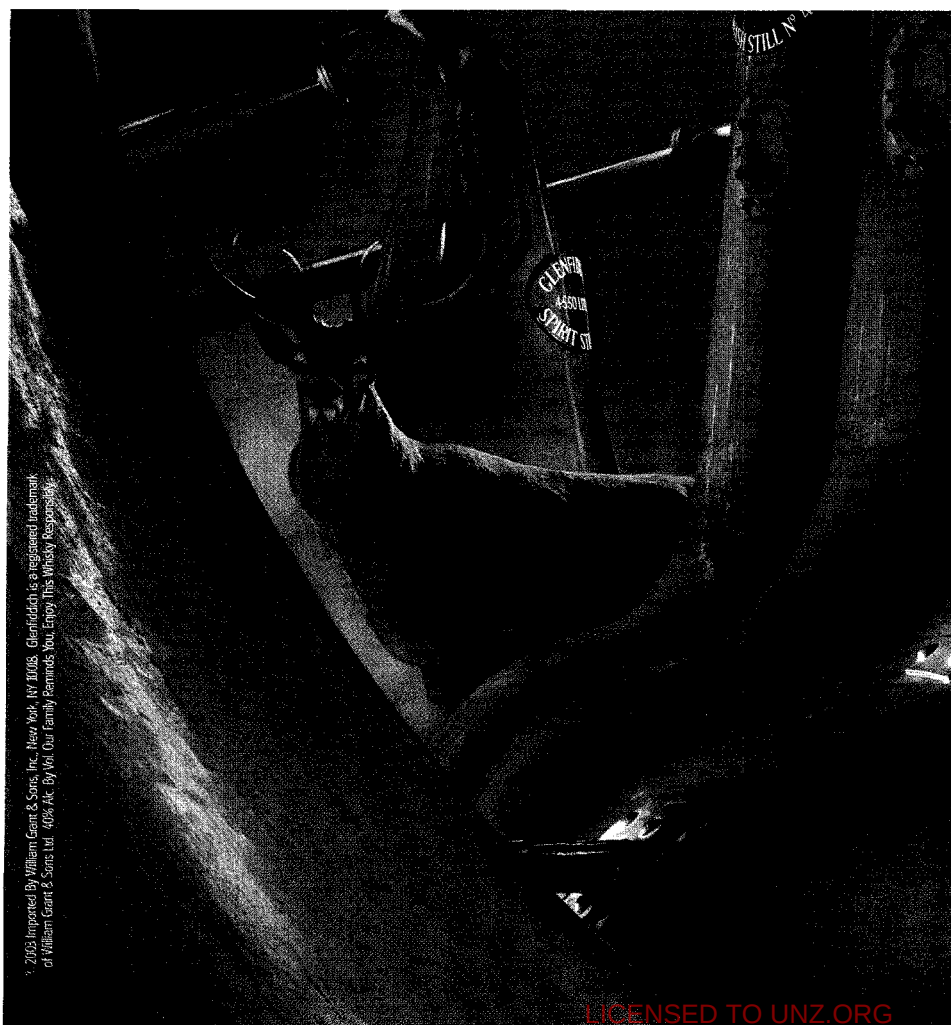
*tween organic and biotech, Mark Alan Kastel leaves the facts far behind. He is wrong about the Hudson Institute: according to a spokeswoman, it gets less than a fifth of its money from corporate sources, and in fiscal 2002 and fiscal 2003 Monsanto and DuPont provided a total of \$37,500, or 0.27 percent of Hudson's \$13.7 million in revenues. He is wrong about the herbicide glyphosate (more commonly known by its trade name, Roundup): it has not been banned in Denmark; it has not turned up in appreciable quantities in drinking water (in Denmark it did turn up in drainage water); "concerns" about cancer links are unsubstantiated; and, having been in common use since the mid-1970s, it has been studied to death and found safe by everyone from federal and state environmental authorities to the World Health Organization.*

*As for weeds' and pests' ability to develop resistance to herbicides and pesticides, that is a problem with agriculture of every kind, not just biotech. Mixing herbicides, a practice Kastel oddly decries, helps prevent resistance and has been standard in farming for years. Biotech allows farmers to use fewer such chemicals, and to apply them less often.*

## Campaign-Finance Reform

I am an attorney and have practiced election law for more than twenty-five years. I exclusively represent Democrats. Seth Citell's article "The Democratic Party Suicide Bill" (July/August *Atlantic*) is the best piece of reporting on campaign-finance reform that I have read. But it does not analyze the fundamental problem, which underpins the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 and similar laws: such legislation is inherently ineffective.

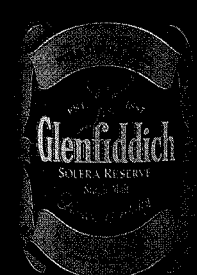
When Congress passed the Campaign Finance Reform Act, in the 1970s, in reaction to the Nixon campaign-contribution scandals, it sought to set up a regulatory mechanism that would both increase disclosure of contributions and limit the amount of money given to candidates. Whereas the disclosure side has worked, the limitation side was quickly overcome by the law of unintended consequences, because the drafters overlooked both the practical realities of running political campaigns and human nature.



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The concepts of hard money and soft money did not exist prior to the original act. Nor did issue ads, independent-expenditure committees, contribution bundling, "party building" accounts, 501(c) and 527 advocacy committees, and PACs. All these mechanisms either were specifically invented by the original law or grew logically out of the complicated regulatory scheme it imposed. Every web of regulation necessarily has holes between its strands. Eager to maximize contribution cash flow, campaign managers and candidates soon began looking for—and finding—the holes. The McCain-Feingold law closes some of these holes but, in order to protect First Amendment rights, necessarily opens others. You can be sure that they have already been found. For example, through the careful raising of money for state-party soft-money accounts, the Democrats will not lose as much soft money as it now seems.

In the end, the reduction of soft money for the Democrats may not matter much. Gitell quotes Representative Dick Gephardt as saying that he voted for McCain-Feingold to limit the Democrats' overdependence on soft money. The irony is that one of Gephardt's opponents for the Democratic presidential nomination, Howard Dean, is showing the way by using the Internet to raise unprecedented amounts of hard dollars, without regard to the new law.

*Richard M. Botteri*  
Portland, Ore.

**S**eth Gitell glosses over the fact that most Democrats and Republicans alike joined in supporting the McCain-Feingold bill's provisions to double the amount of hard money that candidates can accept directly from big donors. This may be the most significant portion of the law, because fat cats will find many ways to evade the soft-money restrictions. George W. Bush, who called for a hard-money increase during his presidential campaign, signed the law largely because it included this increase, and he is now its greatest beneficiary. McCain-Feingold dramatically boosts the clout of Bush's Ranger supporters, who each pledge to raise upwards of \$200,000 for his reelection. But McCain-Feingold's increase in hard money will benefit incumbents

of all stripes, and its enactment represented more self-interest than principle by members of both political parties.

*Derek Cressman*  
Sacramento, Calif.

### Operation Deep Freeze

**T**here was an omission from your list of Department of Defense operations accompanying Robert D. Kaplan's article "Supremacy by Stealth" (July/August *Atlantic*). Since 1955 the Department of Defense has maintained a presence in Christchurch, New Zealand, as part of the United States Antarctic Program. Operating under the name Operation Deep Freeze, this multifaceted logistics program involves intercontinental strategic airlift, ski-equipped theater airlift, ice-breakers, sealift, and other support for peaceful scientific research in Antarctica, under the auspices of the National Science Foundation. As part of this extraordinary program, Department of Defense and U.S. Coast Guard elements work with multinational civic and military organizations to support science that one day might well unlock the secrets of this planet and the universe.

Hope you can stretch your world map enough to include us next time. We should, with luck, still be here.

*Lt. Col. Timothy S. Penn*  
Air National Guard Detachment 13  
Christchurch, New Zealand

#### Editors' Note:

*Our list of U.S. military operations, labeled "1993–present," included only those initiated during that period.*

### Advice & Consent

**C**ullen Murphy's September column, "On Second Thought," mentions "Coincidence Design, Inc.," which is a so-called service allowing wealthy men to hire the company to stalk attractive women and then arrange an accidental meeting. It is a notorious hoax, and was exposed in January of 2002. An excellent synopsis can be found at the always useful Urban Legends Reference Pages: [www.snopes.com/inboxer/hoaxes/coincidence.asp](http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/hoaxes/coincidence.asp).

*Brad Berens*  
Encino, Calif.

**D**espite the current climate of political correctness, not even the highly respected *Atlantic Monthly* seems able to resist the primeval urge to insult somebody and try to get away with it. In your October issue the cartoonist Barry Blitt revived an old and familiar theme and placed it in a new setting. He simply rehashed the tired joke about the light bulb and how many are needed to turn it. Any category can fit, but Blitt chose the Polish soldiers in Iraq as the fall guys.

Before Hitler invaded Poland, in 1939, everyone else was either appeasing or acquiescing to him. The Poles were the first to fight the Nazis and stood firm against their blitzkrieg. If Poland's allies had honored their treaties and immediately intervened, World War II might have been aborted right then and there. Even so, Polish soldiers continued to fight the Germans and provided the fourth largest military component of Allied forces in Europe, which led to eventual victory in 1945.

More recently, Polish soldiers performed professionally in Afghanistan and Bosnia. And before the Berlin Wall came crashing down, it was the Poles who shook the foundations of world communism inside Poland and caused the reverberations that led to its collapse everywhere else. This nasty attempt to get a laugh at our expense is awkwardly misplaced.

*Frank Milewski*  
Chairman, Anti-Bigotry Committee  
Polish American Congress  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### Editors' Note:

*A reader has pointed out that in a review of Peter Kolchin's American Slavery, Benjamin Schwarz erroneously attributed to Kolchin an argument he paraphrased regarding the intense and ambivalent ties between slaves and slaveholders. Although Kolchin does hold this view, the paraphrased lines should have been credited to Eugene Genovese's Roll, Jordan, Roll, a book Schwarz discusses in the review. The reviewer deeply regrets the mistake, which stemmed from faulty notation.*



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# THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, *General John Abizaid on the spot; Elia Kazan in memoriam; The Stepford Wives, revisited*

## MARGARET TALBOT

*"Botox and Xanax are hardly the sexist husband's revenge. Their success is a highly complex achievement of marketing, not of male supremacy."*

PAGE 28

## SYDNEY J. FREEDBERG JR.

*"Abizaid's entire life seems to have prepared him to be the military proconsul of an Arab country in chaos."*

PAGE 32

## MARK STEYN

*"Amid the herdlike moral poseurs Kazan was always temperamentally an outsider, and his work benefited after he became one in a more formal sense."*

PAGE 38

## PRIMARY SOURCES

*"Although broadcasters ignore political campaigns in their news coverage, they are happy to exploit them for their revenue-generating potential: the price political candidates had to pay for television air time increased by 53 percent in the two months leading up to the November 2002 elections."*

PAGE 40

## THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

*"Reportedly, so many North Korean scientists are now in Iran, developing nuclear warheads and missiles, that a resort on the Caspian Sea has been set aside for their exclusive use."*

PAGE 44

## THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS

*Communism is the deadliest fantasy in human history (but does anyone care?)*

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

.....

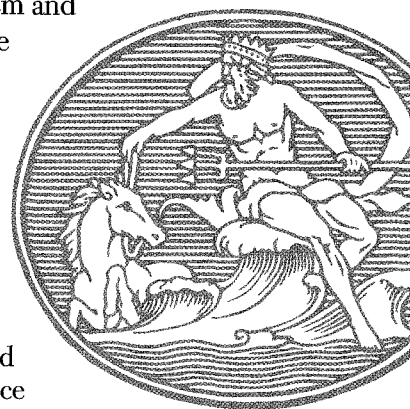
In January of this year the late Michael Kelly, who was a *Washington Post* columnist as well as the editor-at-large of this magazine, decried in the *Post* the fact that antiwar marches in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco were sponsored by an organization, called International ANSWER, that is "a front group for the communist Workers World Party," which is, "literally, a Stalinist organization." As he was sometimes known to do, Kelly worked up a bit of dudgeon: "The left marches with those who would maintain in power the leading oppressors of humanity in the world."

Shortly afterward the columnist and essayist Katha Pollitt, writing in *The Nation*, advised him to calm down. "Kelly really should get out of the house more," she said. If he had attended the Washington march, as she did, he would have seen what a diverse and positive affair it was. She conceded that ANSWER was a "weird pseudomarxist sect," and she acknowledged its "off-key Stalinism and refusal to condemn Saddam Hussein," but she argued against taking any of that too seriously.

It always seemed to me that ANSWER spoke only for itself, that not many people were listening, and that if war was an unpopular plan, the movement against it would grow way beyond the capacity of ANSWER to control it or lead it. In fact, ANSWER may have unintentionally spurred the rest of us to get busy and come up with alternatives like United for Peace and Justice or the Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

Let me ask you, please, to go back and reread that paragraph, but this time make one change throughout: substitute the words "the American Nazi Party" for ANSWER. Or, if you prefer, substitute "the KKK." Notice how utterly out of place the author's insouciance suddenly seems. It is inconceivable that any self-respecting American intellectual would call a march sponsored by Nazis or Klansmen a worthy event. Yet when it comes to communists—well, what's the big deal?

Around the time of the Kelly-Pollitt exchange I attended a lecture in Washington that I can only describe as a consciousness-raising. It was given by Alan Charles Kors, a historian (of European intellectual history) at the University of Pennsylvania. For some years I've admired Kors's work opposing speech codes on university campuses, so I was





drawn more by the speaker than by the subject—"Can there be an 'after socialism'?" I left feeling chastened.

Kors said this: "The West accepts an epochal, monstrous, unforgivable double standard. We rehearse the crimes of Nazism almost daily; we teach them to our children as ultimate historical and moral lessons; and we bear witness to every victim. We are, with so few exceptions, almost silent on the crimes of communism. So the bodies lie among us, unnoticed, everywhere." And so many bodies! Not six million but 60 million, or 100 million—in any case scores and scores of millions. Too many ever to number.

In her recent book, *Gulag: A History*, Anne Applebaum notes that Russia has no national museum or monument or place of mourning devoted to the crimes of communism. There have been "no public truth-telling sessions in Russia, no parliamentary hearings, no official investigations of any kind into the murders or the massacres or the camps of the USSR." In December of 2001, ten years after the Soviet Union dissolved, "thirteen of the fifteen former Soviet republics were run by former communists, as were many of the former satellite states."

Hoping to do better, in 1993 Congress and President Bill Clinton authorized the construction, on public land but with private funds, of a national memorial to honor the victims of communism. The act cited "the deaths of over 100,000,000 victims in an unprecedented imperial communist holocaust," and resolved that "the sacrifices of these victims should be permanently memorialized so that never again will nations and peoples allow so evil a tyranny to terrorize the world." The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation then set out to raise \$100 million, or a dollar per victim. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum cost \$168 million, so \$100 million seemed reasonable.

Ten years later the project has scaled back its target to \$450,000, which the foundation's president and CEO—a

retired diplomat and consultant named Jay Katzen, himself working without pay—told me he expects to have raised by the end of this year. That will cover a memorial near (not on) the National Mall, in Washington, and an online museum. Original plans had called for a bricks-and-mortar museum and archive, but they will have to wait. "For a lot of people," Katzen said, "this does not have the immediacy, the sensitivity, that the Holocaust, for good reasons, has."

Well, the Holocaust museum was not dedicated until almost fifty years after the Holocaust. Perhaps these things take time. Perhaps communism is still too close to be seen in perspective. Perhaps this and perhaps that. The fact remains: communism, not Nazism or racism or whatever other ism you

please, is the deadliest fantasy in human history, and even Americans, for all our struggles against it, have not yet looked it full in the face.

The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation has a Web site, for those who are interested in learning or helping ([www.victimsofcommunism.org](http://www.victimsofcommunism.org)). There are, I think, at least three reasons to hope that the project succeeds. A memorial in Washington would honor the dead. It would commemorate the longest and possibly the hardest geopolitical struggle that the United States has ever undertaken. Not least, it might bring closer the time when activists will be ashamed to march under communist sponsorship, and when writers will be ashamed to make excuses for them. ▀

*Jonathan Rauch is an Atlantic correspondent.*

## A STEPFOORD FOR OUR TIMES

*To work as social satire today, a remake of The Stepford Wives should be as much about perfecting children as about perfecting wives*

In 1975, when the movie *The Stepford Wives* first came out, it was widely regarded as a chilling parable about men's fears of feminism, a tale of horror that also worked as a social satire on sexism. Sure, it struck some women's liberationists as a ham-fisted attempt to cash in on the movement. But Ira Levin, who wrote the novel on which the movie was based, seems to have been in earnest—or as earnest as he could be with a brisk little potboiler in which suburban husbands band together to replace their wives with lubricious and empty-headed robots. Levin even broadcast his good faith with a somber epigraph from Simone de Beauvoir:

Now *The Stepford Wives* is being remade (a summer release is planned), with a big-name cast headed by Nicole Kidman, and in a spirit bent on preserving its reputation as both camp classic and libber invective—a barb aimed squarely at what De Beauvoir called the "bad grace"

of men forced to deal with autonomous women. "Straight white males act like the angry new endangered minority," Paul Rudnick, the remake's screenwriter, told Maureen Dowd for a column in *The New York Times*. "Men only evolve with a gun at their head."

So it is curious that the term "Stepford wives," which has enjoyed such a sturdy life in our culture, is so seldom used in the critique of sexism. What the term has come to signify, above all, is a kind of feminine perfectionism—usually in the domestic realm, but not necessarily in the service of a husband. It evokes the control freak rather than the hopeless submissive. (It has had a particularly successful run as a taunt for Martha Stewart.) As Peter Straub laments in his introduction to the thirtieth-anniversary edition of Levin's novel, the "misconception" of the book as a "satire on the banality of suburban housewives" has "installed its title in our

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People with allergic reactions, such as asthma, to aspirin or other arthritis medicines should not take VIOXX. In rare cases, serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, can occur without warning.

Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney disease, or a history of angina, heart attack, or a blocked artery in your heart. VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for the prevention of heart attack or stroke. VIOXX should not be used by women in late pregnancy.

In clinical studies, commonly reported side effects included upper respiratory infection, diarrhea, nausea, and high blood pressure. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor.

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You should read this information before you start taking VIOXX\*. Also, read the leaflet each time you refill your prescription, in case any information has changed. This leaflet provides only a summary of certain information about VIOXX. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals that contains more complete information. This leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIOXX when you start taking your medicine and at regular checkups.

#### **What is VIOXX?**

VIOXX is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to reduce pain and inflammation (swelling and soreness). VIOXX is available as a tablet or a liquid that you take by mouth.

VIOXX is a medicine for:

- relief of osteoarthritis (the arthritis caused by age-related "wear and tear" on bones and joints)
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- management of acute pain in adults (like the short-term pain you can get after a dental or surgical operation)
- treatment of menstrual pain (pain during women's monthly periods).

#### **Who should not take VIOXX?**

Do not take VIOXX if you:

- have had an allergic reaction such as asthma attacks, hives, or swelling of the throat and face to aspirin or other NSAIDs (for example, ibuprofen and naproxen).
- have had an allergic reaction to rofecoxib, which is the active ingredient of VIOXX, or to any of its inactive ingredients. (See Inactive Ingredients at the end of this leaflet.)

#### **What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with VIOXX?**

Tell your doctor if you are:

- pregnant or plan to become pregnant. VIOXX should not be used in late pregnancy because it may harm the fetus.
- breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. It is not known whether VIOXX is passed through to human breast milk and what its effects could be on a nursing child.

Tell your doctor if you have:

- history of angina, heart attack or a blocked artery in your heart
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- heart failure
- high blood pressure
- had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs
- had a serious stomach problem in the past.

Tell your doctor about:

- any other medical problems or allergies you have now or have had.
- all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, even those you can get without a prescription.

Tell your doctor if you develop:

- serious stomach problems such as ulcer or bleeding symptoms (for instance, stomach burning or black stools, which are signs of possible stomach bleeding).
- unexplained weight gain or swelling of the feet and/or legs.
- skin rash or allergic reactions. If you have a severe allergic reaction, get medical help right away.

#### **How should I take VIOXX?**

VIOXX should be taken once a day. Your doctor will decide what dose of VIOXX you should take and how long you should take it. You may take VIOXX with or without food.

#### **Can I take VIOXX with other medicines?**

Tell your doctor about all of the other medicines you are taking or plan to take while you are on VIOXX, even other medicines that you can get without a prescription. Your doctor may want to check that your medicines are working properly together if you are taking other medicines such as:

- warfarin (a blood thinner)
- theophylline (a medicine used to treat asthma)
- rifampin (an antibiotic)
- ACE inhibitors (medicines used for high blood pressure and heart failure)
- lithium (a medicine used to treat a certain type of depression).

VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for prevention of heart attack or stroke. If you take both aspirin and VIOXX, you may have a greater chance of serious stomach problems than if you take VIOXX alone. If you are currently taking aspirin for prevention of heart attack or stroke, you should not discontinue taking aspirin without consulting your doctor.

#### **What are the possible side effects of VIOXX?**

Serious but rare side effects that have been reported in patients taking VIOXX and/or related medicines have included:

- Serious stomach problems, such as stomach and intestinal bleeding, can occur with or without warning symptoms. These problems, if severe, could lead to hospitalization or death. Although this happens rarely, you should watch for signs that you may have this serious side effect and tell your doctor right away.
- Heart attacks and similar serious events have been reported in patients taking VIOXX.
- Serious allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat which may cause difficulty breathing or swallowing and wheezing occur rarely but may require treatment right away. Severe skin reactions have also been reported.
- Serious kidney problems occur rarely, including acute kidney failure and worsening of chronic kidney failure.
- Severe liver problems, including hepatitis, jaundice and liver failure, occur rarely in patients taking NSAIDs, including VIOXX. Tell your doctor if you develop symptoms of liver problems. These include nausea, tiredness, itching, tenderness in the right upper abdomen, and flu-like symptoms.

In addition, the following side effects have been reported: anxiety, blurred vision, colitis, confusion, decreased levels of sodium in the blood, depression, fluid in the lungs, hair loss, hallucinations, increased levels of potassium in the blood, insomnia, low blood cell counts, menstrual disorder, palpitations, pancreatitis, ringing in the ears, severe increase in blood pressure, tingling sensation, unusual headache with stiff neck (aseptic meningitis), vertigo, worsening of epilepsy.

More common, but less serious side effects reported with VIOXX have included the following:

Upper and/or lower respiratory infection and/or inflammation  
Headache  
Dizziness  
Diarrhea  
Nausea and/or vomiting  
Heartburn, stomach pain and upset  
Swelling of the legs and/or feet  
High blood pressure  
Back pain  
Tiredness  
Urinary tract infection.

These side effects were reported in at least 2% of osteoarthritis patients receiving daily doses of VIOXX 12.5 mg to 25 mg in clinical studies.

The side effects described above do not include all of the side effects reported with VIOXX. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects. Any time you have a medical problem you think may be related to VIOXX, talk to your doctor.

#### **What else can I do to help manage my arthritis pain?**

Talk to your doctor about:

- Exercise
- Controlling your weight
- Hot and cold treatments
- Using support devices.

#### **What else should I know about VIOXX?**

This leaflet provides a summary of certain information about VIOXX. If you have any questions or concerns about VIOXX, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or pain, talk to your health professional. Your pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals.

Do not share VIOXX with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you. It should be taken only for the condition for which it was prescribed.

Keep VIOXX and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Inactive Ingredients:

Oral suspension: citric acid (monohydrate), sodium citrate (dihydrate), sorbitol solution, strawberry flavor, xanthan gum, sodium methylparaben, sodium propylparaben.

Tablets: croscarmellose sodium, hydroxypropyl cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and yellow ferric oxide.

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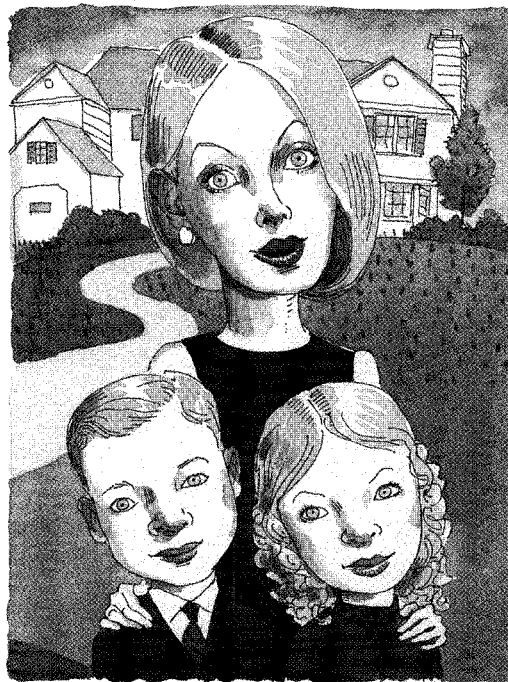


language as shorthand for those homemakers who affect an uncanny perfection."

I can imagine a few explanations for why the reference has served more effectively as a dis of (overly domesticated) women than of (tyrannical) men. One is a sort of conspiracy theory, which holds that any parody of male behavior eventually becomes, through the relentless workings of misogyny, a parody of female behavior. But another—and, I think, a more convincing one—is that the specter of men transforming their wives into cookie-baking robots with a limited grasp of the language doesn't seem so chilling now, because it is not so salient. Sure, Lara Croft and her video-game progeny are busty cyberbabes, like *Stepford* wives on steroids. But those babes kick ass, which confuses matters a bit. And yes, as Maureen Dowd reminded us, Botox and all the other domesticated and mass-marketed forms of plastic surgery make their consumers a little more placid-looking, a little more *Stepford*-perfect. Finally, if we want to throw them in, mood-modulating prescription drugs are easier than ever to resort to. But Botox and Xanax are hardly the sexist husband's revenge. Their success is a highly complex achievement of marketing, not of male supremacy. And given that the vast majority of twentysomethings, men included, say that what they are seeking in a spouse is an economically independent "soul mate," the ideal of wifely vacuousness, if it ever existed, isn't exactly thriving today.

In contrast, parodies of pan-gender upper-middle-class perfectionism do have bite, because we live in a world of it: life coaches and education consultants; endless hours of strenuously enriching and uplifting activities for children; IQ-boosting exercises everywhere we look. One of the most striking things about the original *Stepford Wives*, both the novel and the movie, is how small a place is occupied by children. The protagonist, Joanna Eberhart, and her husband move from Manhattan to suburban Connecticut

partly because the schools are better, but not much is made of that fact. In the movie two little blonde girls bounce around in the back of the family's station wagon (no seat-belt laws in 1975) as the family decamps for still, green Stepford; but after that we don't see much of them. Katharine Ross as Joanna, a listlessly rebellious amateur photographer and hippie chick, comes off as a little childlike herself, with her tomboy frame, her long loose hair, and her lovely unlined face.



None of the wives, least of all Joanna, is busy schlepping her kids to afternoon activities—or, indeed, anywhere. With so few parental duties to attend to, Joanna seems to have plenty of time, in her pre-robotic state, to stare dreamily into space and to troop around town with her louche friend Bobbie, trying to stoke interest in a consciousness-raising group and giggling over afternoon treats of Scotch and Ring-Dings. She makes coffee for her husband, but it's instant (this is the seventies, after all, an era ignorant of the unyielding foodie standards to come): a couple of spoonfuls of those glittering crystals and he's good to go. This was a time when a bubbling tuna casserole and some Toll House cookies

could make one a domestic paragon. Imagine all the recipes those evil *Stepford* guys would now have to program into their robots—who'd probably go haywire serving the coulis-of-heirloom-tomato appetizer at their first dinner party. *Stepford*'s animatronic wives don't shine in a maternal capacity either. Mainly they boff their husbands, cook (casseroles), clean with household products they adore, and glide languidly through the supermarket in frilly halter dresses—

all Jordan-almond pastels, a palette their barbarous menfolk evidently favor.

A *Stepford Wives* that worked as social satire today would be different from its predecessor: It would be at least as much about the project of perfecting children as that of perfecting wives. It would be about the collaboration between ambitious fathers and mothers who believe both in the meritocracy and in doing what it takes to rig it in the interest of their own offspring's Ivy League prospects. It would be about shameless string-pulling to get kids into the right nursery school. Status anxiety about three-year-olds. The subtle

assessing of other people's children in relation to one's own.

But I suspect that such half-panicked striving won't be a big part of the new *Stepford Wives*, which promises to be a fizzier sort of thing. An audience can more easily feel a smug distance from diabolically boorish men than from familiar-looking couples with a shared investment in perfecting their children. What the new *Stepford Wives* may well turn out to be, perhaps despite itself, is a movie that reminds us how farfetched the idea of a backlash male conspiracy really is. ■

*Margaret Talbot is a fellow at the New America Foundation and a contributing writer at The New York Times Magazine.*



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## ABIZAID OF ARABIA

*General John Abizaid has driven big changes in the American military. Now, as he commands U.S. forces in the Middle East, his ideas are being put to the test*

This past July, a week after taking charge—as the chief of what the military calls Central Command—of all U.S. forces in the Middle East, the four-star Army general John Abizaid stepped over the line. He deliberately used the loaded word “guerrilla” to describe the escalating Iraqi resistance to U.S. occupation—something his civilian superiors had gone out of their way to avoid. Reporters pounced, even as soldiers quietly applauded Abizaid’s candor. The Administration let it go—testimony to Abizaid’s standing in the Pentagon, where he is said to be one of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s favorite officers.

And not only Rumsfeld’s. To a remarkable degree Abizaid is admired by his fellow officers, many of whom have said outright that he is uniquely suited to oversee the increasingly complex and bloody occupation of Iraq. Indeed, Abizaid’s entire life seems to have prepared him to be the military proconsul of an Arab country in chaos. But now the question is whether he can step up from a career of triumphs in smaller arenas to take on the nation-building challenge of the decade.

Lieutenant Colonel Hank Keirse (now retired) got a firsthand look at Abizaid’s approach when the general commanded an airborne brigade in a war-games exercise at Fort Polk, Louisiana, back in 1995. “He was probably at his best in the chaos of the ‘low-intensity’ fight,” Keirse recalls, “the one that most usually confuses the modern American commander.” In the phase of the exercise simulating a “high-intensity” war, against a conventional, tank-heavy force, Abizaid’s performance was unspectacular, marred by gaps in the performance of his staff. But in the phase simulating a “low-intensity” war, against Third World insurgents, Abizaid’s unit killed more guerrillas than any other Keirse had ever seen. Discarding standard procedure (“He operated that brigade almost by ignoring his staff,” Keirse recalls), Abizaid impro-

vised quick counterstrikes and repeatedly turned the tables on his would-be ambushers. This unconventional approach to warfare was not how the Army had taught Abizaid to fight. It was something he had largely taught himself.

John Abizaid graduated from West Point in 1973, ranked forty-second out of 944 in the class that just missed Vietnam. Above his yearbook photo is the cryptic caption “The ‘Mad Arab’ came from the deserts of the West to become a star-man”—a reference to Abizaid’s

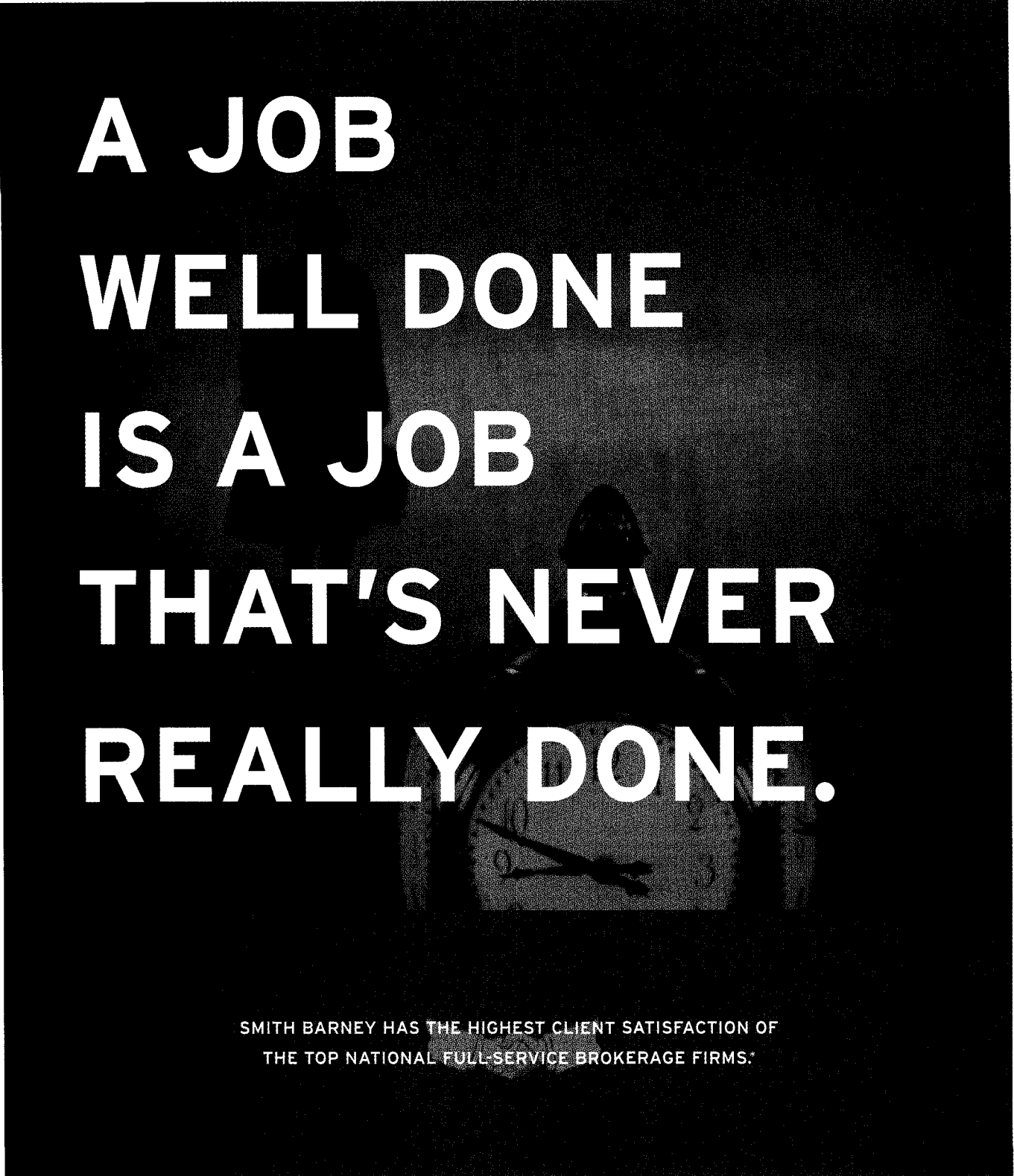
Lebanese roots, to his California hometown of Coleville, and to the star insignia he was entitled to wear for being in the top five percent of his class. It was at West Point that he first developed a reputation for fierce intelligence that persists today. “When people talk among themselves,” says Michael Pasquarett, a retired colonel who teaches at the Army War College, “they’ll say, ‘Abizaid has a forty-pound brain.’” After graduation Abizaid spent three years in elite airborne and Ranger units, as a platoon and then a company commander; next he won an Olmsted scholarship—a military award for study abroad, given to only three to six young Army officers each year. Most officers would have chosen to study somewhere in Western Europe, where Army careers were then usually made. Abizaid decided to go to the University of Jordan, in Amman.

Olmsted scholars are supposed to study on their own, taking courses in a foreign language at a civilian institution, their uniforms in mothballs, their only Army contact the military attaché at the U.S. embassy. Abizaid headed into a situation that was exceptionally unsettled; after a year of intensive Arabic in the United States, he arrived in Amman in September of 1978, just ahead of the first explosion of modern extremist Islam—the Iranian revolution of 1979. Jordan, with its pro-American monarchy and its Palestinian majority, was thrown into

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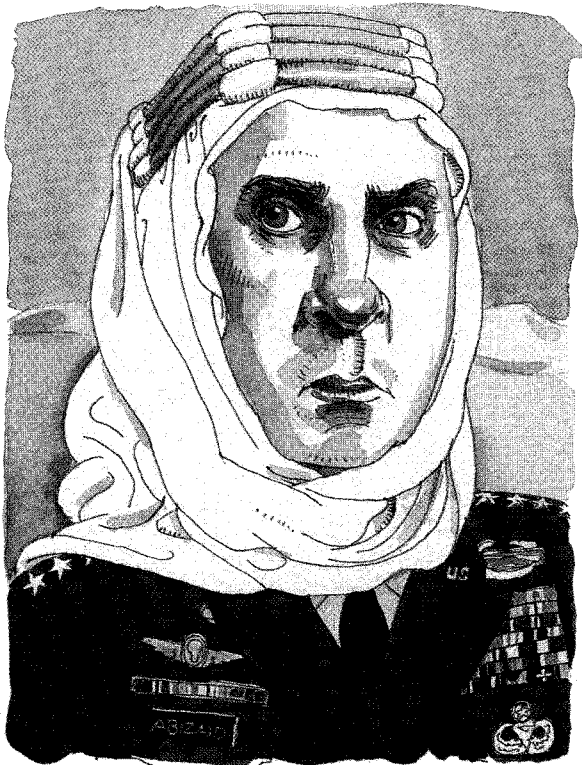
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turmoil by events in Iran; unrest and riots repeatedly shut down the university.

So Abizaid struck out on his own. He trained with the Jordanian army, visited neighboring Iraq (where Saddam Hussein was consolidating power), and camped out in the desert with Bedouins. "He wasn't just talking to well-to-do English-speaking people in Amman," one officer who knew Abizaid in Jordan says. "He was getting out to tribal areas and having dinner with sheikhs."

When Abizaid returned to the United States, in 1980, he completed an M.A. in Middle Eastern studies at Harvard, and then went back to his combat-infantry career. This was unusual. Officers who are labeled specialists in a given region usually end up at headquarters and embassies, pigeonholed as area experts. But except for a short tour as a UN observer in Lebanon, Abizaid spent the 1980s in one career-enhancing post after another: leading a Ranger company air-dropped into Grenada; serving in the Army Chief of Staff's research group; commanding the 3/325 Infantry, widely considered to be the best battalion in Europe.

Abizaid led that battalion into Iraq in 1991, in the chaos of Operation Provide Comfort. The mission was to protect and feed thousands of Kurdish refugees

fleeing Saddam Hussein's reprisals, but without restarting the Gulf War in their behalf. Prohibited from unleashing his superior firepower, Abizaid used everything from laborious negotiations to painfully loud rock music to keep the Iraqi forces back.

In a conventional career the next stop would have been the Army War College, where future generals are groomed. Instead Abizaid spent a year at

Stanford's Hoover Institution, on a National Security Affairs fellowship, studying how to train troops for peacekeeping. In an article about the challenges of peacekeeping that he co-authored at the time (published in *Special Warfare*, the magazine of the Special Forces, and based on his meetings with military officials in Somalia and elsewhere), Abizaid wrote that "doctrinal voids exist at every level" and argued repeatedly that peacekeeping required a new kind of initiative that would have to rise up from the lowest ranks. In northern Iraq and in Bosnia peacekeepers were scattered in small units, isolated from one another and surrounded by feuding locals. "In each instance," Abizaid wrote, "superiors were far away, and quite junior leaders were required to defuse numerous potentially dangerous situations." He underlined his point by quoting Brigadier Michael Harbottle, an Englishman and a former chief of staff for UN forces deployed to Cyprus: "There is no doubt in my mind that the success of a peacekeeping operation depends more than anything else on the vigilance and mental alertness of the most junior soldier and his non-commissioned leader, for it is on their reaction and immediate response that the success of the operations rests."

In 1997, after a tour with the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia, Abizaid moved to West Point to become its commandant. The role of the commandant does not involve overall command of the academy (which falls to the superintendent, a respected elder general) or supervision of the academic program (which falls to the dean, a long-serving professor). The commandant is an ambassador from the real Army—a one-star general who spends just two years at West Point and whose task is to ready the cadets to be real officers. He oversees the honor code, the daily drills, and the summer field training that makes West Point a fifty-weeks-a-year experience.

When Abizaid arrived at West Point, the military was still struggling with the ambiguities of the post-Cold War world. What did it mean to be an officer in a country with no clear foe? Abizaid stepped into an environment in which battles raged over whether to train warriors or peacekeepers, whether to scream in cadets' faces or correct them calmly, whether different physical standards were appropriate for female cadets, whether a sensitivity program called "Respect for Others" was politically correct pabulum, and whether some cadet "traditions" had in fact degenerated into hazing. (In one popular pre-Abizaid practice, called "shower detail," upperclassmen wrapped a freshman, or "plebe," in a hot plastic poncho and had him recite academy trivia for hours, sweating profusely, until he passed out.) Reformers argued that the old ways taught cadets to be bullies; traditionalists countered that the new ways would make them wimps. The superintendent who hired Abizaid, Lieutenant General Dan Christman (now retired), sought to strike a balance by adopting an approach that he characterized as "demanding without being demeaning." To train cadets for the realities of the modern world, Christman decided, he needed a commandant "who was both a warrior and someone who could think."

Abizaid cracked down on hazing, to the point of expelling repeat offenders.



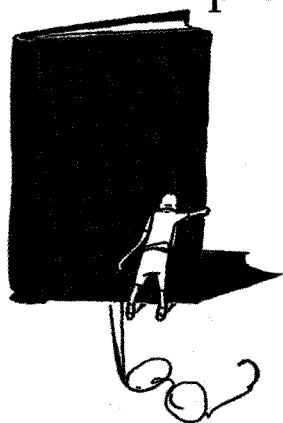
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# THE **Atlantic.** preview



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"People from MacArthur on tried to get rid of it," says David Lipsky, whose recently published *Absolutely American* followed a class of cadets from 1998 to 2002. But under Abizaid, he says, "that stuff stopped." At the same time, Abizaid made cadets' training more rigorous. According to Hank Keirse, who worked for Abizaid at West Point, Abizaid's approach was "I don't just want them getting yelled at by the first classmen [seniors] and upperclassmen back in the barracks about their beds' not being made. I want the toughness to be out in the field." Abizaid added more miles of running to the training program, more weapons drills, and a multi-day "Warrior Forge" in which cadets crossed rope bridges, fought simulated battles all night, pushed a Humvee a thousand yards, and finally swam across a lake. Traditionally, the last day of summer field training ended with exhausted sophomore cadets' piling into trucks for the eight-mile trip back to West Point. Abizaid had them run back, and he ran at the head of the column.

One cadet who benefited from Abizaid's hands-on approach was Second Lieutenant Tucker Mahoney, class of 2002. Mahoney spent his first two days of fire-arms drill missing target after target, despite a crowd of other cadets and instructors who were trying to help, until, he says, Abizaid "came over, dismissed them all, got into a prone position next to me, and told me to relax and fire." Two hours later, with Abizaid still by his side, Mahoney finally mastered the drill. "He knew when to be a disciplinarian," says Captain Alan Clinard, class of 1998, "but he knew how to use other methods, [especially] leadership by example. He really emphasized the cadets' taking charge. He made the upperclass cadets a lot more involved in what was trained, how it was trained." Abizaid also instituted a controversial reform in which cadets, not faculty officers, handle most of the disciplinary system themselves, using elaborate review boards modeled on regular Army hearings. His changes to the disciplinary sys-

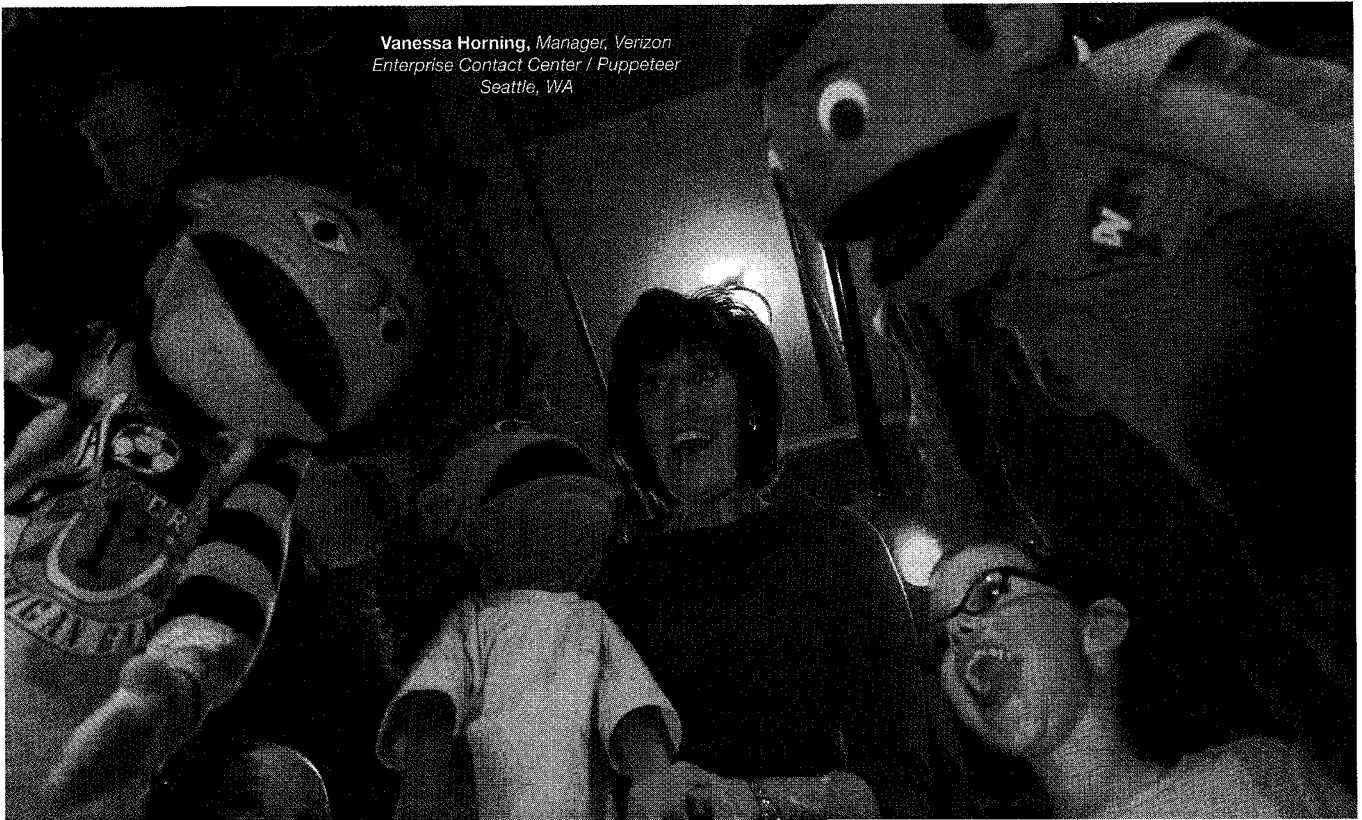
tem have raised some eyebrows. One officer who otherwise admires Abizaid calls the process "silly," saying, "You have eighteen-year-olds being supervised by nineteen-year-olds who are being supervised by twenty-year-olds." Silly or not, the changes were motivated by Abizaid's desire to implement a new philosophy of military training that would be in step with modern realities. Army units that had spent the Cold War in garrison were suddenly being scattered across an ever messier world; new lieutenants could no longer count on commanding one small part of a large formation lined up against a single foe. "Having come from the Balkans," Lieutenant Colonel Charles Peddy says of Abizaid, with whom he worked on the new disciplinary regulations at West Point, "and having worked in Iraq after the '91 war, he had an understanding that the new graduates had to be more than just guys who could shoot rifles and maneuver. You were going to find a young lieutenant by himself as the mayor of a small town."

**T**hat is just what is now happening across Iraq. The problem, of course, is that General Abizaid cannot command a 130,000-strong army of occupation the way he led the cadets at West Point or his airborne brigade in war games at Fort Polk—by leaving his staff behind in order to be hands-on at the front. The irony of being a four-star general is that all your tremendous power must be wielded through others. Abizaid has spent three decades building the experience and the education that now underlie his plans for running Central Command, but he can be only as effective as the soldiers working for him on the ground. It is the young captains and lieutenants in their twenties—the generation brought up in the new military that Abizaid helped to create—whose day-to-day decisions will pacify, or provoke, the people of Iraq. **A**

*Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. covers homeland-security policy, interagency coordination, and military reform for National Journal.*



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# V

# E





## THE CRUCIBLE OF HOLLYWOOD'S GUILT

Elia Kazan (1909–2003)

You usually hear the tune on Oscar night, but not often the lyric, which is more to the point:

*Hooray for Hollywood,  
Where you're terrific if you're even good.*

When someone's really terrific, it's a different story. In a town where everyone from Johnny Depp to Janeane Garofalo is an "artist," Hollywood doesn't always know how to deal with the real thing. In 1996 the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, mulling over its Career Achievement Award, decided to reject Elia Kazan and honor instead Roger Corman, the director of *Swamp Women*, *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, and *Teenage Caveman*. *Swamp Women* and *Attack of the Crab Monsters* are good, and *Teenage Caveman* is not only good, it's also an eloquent plea for world disarmament—at least according to its then youthful star, Robert Vaughn. But *On the Waterfront* is terrific. This should not be a difficult call.

But apparently it is. Kazan can make a claim to be the father of modern American acting, having brought Stanislavskian techniques to Broadway and then to film through Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Rod Steiger. He was the best theater director of the forties and fifties, and later a fine novelist, and when he walked onstage in 1999 to receive a belated Lifetime Achievement Oscar, he might reasonably have expected the orchestra to be vamping Leonard Bernstein's theme to *On the Waterfront* for a good ten minutes while Hollywood roared its appreciation. Instead, outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion elderly hack screenwriters led protests, and inside, the likes of Sean Penn sat on their hands. For both Hollywood's ancient D-list Communists and its A-list anti-anti-Communists, there's only one thing about Kazan that matters: he "named names."

It's no fun being a socially conscious movie star if nobody's conscious of you. You want to be noticed. Not too

noticed—not Salman Rushdie price-on-your-head noticed. But just a little bit of attention. And the only time anyone in power paid any attention to the political views of Hollywood people was half a century ago. In an ideal world—or if you were making a movie on the subject—the fellows who were politically

"persecuted" would be a little more talented, or at least prominent; and maybe it would be better if they weren't subscribers to an ideology so thoroughly failed and so compre-

hensively rejected by anyone who's had the misfortune to live under it. But those are mere nitpicky details next to the towering feeling of validation the latter-day Hollywood activist derives from his McCarthy fetish. To the Richard Dreyfuss generation, what Kazan did is an affront to a deep conviction of their own heroism.

Nor is the fact that Hollywood's belief in its own heroism derives from a moment of colossal Hollywood cowardice any obstacle. The blacklist "victims" were blacklisted not by the government but by the studios (Warner Brothers, Paramount, Disney)—the same folks who run Hollywood today. In 1999, when Penn and Dreyfuss were up in arms over Kazan's Oscar, old Lew Wasserman was still going to his office at Universal every day. Fifty years ago, had he chosen to, Wasserman and his talent agency could have broken the blacklist as decisively as he broke the studio system. But Wasserman and the suits were absolved, and their sins were subcontracted to one elderly retired director: as the former blacklisted screenwriter Norma Barzman told CNN, "Elia Kazan's lifetime achievement is great films and destroyed lives, and even a third thing,

which is a lasting climate of fear over Hollywood and maybe over the country." Kazan became the crucible (if he'll forgive the expression) of the industry's institutional guilt over the McCarthy era.

To this day Barzman thinks that Kazan ratted because he had a half-million-dollar deal lined up for *On the Waterfront*—thus Hollywood's Communists were true to their principles, and its anti-Communists were in it for the money. This would be mere condescension if *On the Waterfront* were an Esther Williams aqua-musical, but it's rendered laughable by the fact that the film is instead the most cogent response possible to the likes of the Barzmans, beginning with the exquisite joke of its choice of analogy for Communist penetration in Hollywood: a waterfront union corrupt-



BETTMANN/CORBIS

ed by racketeers. After all, until the director's detractors began insisting that personal loyalty trumps all other considerations, the notion that "rattin'" was the ultimate sin was confined mostly to the mob.

Kazan had spent his first five years on the move—born to Greek parents in Istanbul, who moved on to Berlin and eventually New York. He understood the force of the big impersonal currents



of history, because his family had been swept along in their wake. From 2003 it's difficult to appreciate the swiftness of the Red march in the postwar years: the Soviets very nearly grabbed Greece and Italy; their stooges seized Poland in 1945, Bulgaria in 1946, Hungary and Romania in 1947, Czechoslovakia in 1948, China in 1949; they were the main influence on the nationalist movements of Africa and Asia; they neutered much of what was left. You would have to be awfully convinced of American exceptionalism to think the republic was uniquely immune.

But the arts have little time for anti-Communists, especially premature anti-Communists, especially as premature as Kazan: he quit the party in 1936, after he'd refused to help it turn the Group Theatre into an actors' collective. Until then he was a conventional lefty, the stellar lefty of the Group's *Waiting for Lefty*, the one who ends the play by roaring the one-word injunction "Strike!" But if we were to frame Kazan's testimony to HUAC in terms of personal loyalty, what about his responsibility to, say, Vsevolod Meyerhold? When Kazan joined the Group, straight out of Yale, the company looked to the Russians for inspiration—not just to Stanislavsky but also to his wayward disciple, Meyerhold. The latter was a great mentor to the young Kazan and other Group members. This was a period, remember, when the Group frequently visited Russia; *Lefty*, for example, was staged in Moscow. Meyerhold loved the older stylized forms—commedia dell'arte, pantomime—and refused to confine himself to Socialist Realism. So Stalin had him arrested and executed.

Think about that: murdered over a difference of opinion about a directing style. As "persecution" goes, that's a little more thorough than forcing some screenwriter to work on a schlock network variety show under a false name.

Amid the herdlike moral poseurs Kazan was always temperamentally an

outsider, and his work benefited after he became one in a more formal sense. But both before and after, his best productions concerned themselves with a common question: the point at which you're obliged to break with your own—your union, your class, your group, or, in Kazan's case, your Group. The 1947 Oscar winner *Gentleman's Agreement* strikes most contemporary observers as very tame, square Kazan. But in a curious way that's the point. When you start watching and you realize it's an issue movie "about" anti-Semitism, you expect it to get ugly, to show us Jew-bashing in the schoolyard and vile language about "kikes." But it stays up the genteel end with dinner-party embarrassments, restricted resort hotels, an understanding about the sort of person one sells one's property to. Dorothy McGuire and her Connecticut friends aren't bad people, but in their world, as much as on Johnny Friendly's waterfront, people conform: they turn a blind eye to the Jew-disparaging joke, they discreetly avoid confronting the truth about the hotel's admission policies, and, as Gregory Peck comes to understand, they are the respectable face of what at the sharp end means pogroms and genocide.

That's what all those Hollywood and Broadway Communists did. They were the polite front of an ideology that led to mass murder, and they expected Kazan to honor *their* gentleman's agreement. In those polite house parties Gregory Peck goes to it's rather boorish and tedious to become too exercised about anti-Semitism. And likewise, at gatherings in the arts it's boorish and tedious to become too exercised about communism—no matter how many faraway, foreign, unglamorous people it kills. Elia Kazan was on the right side of history. His enemies line up with the apologists for thugs and tyrants. Whose reputation would you bet on in the long run? **A**

*Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.*

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## PRIMARY SOURCES

*The White House's environmental "science"; how to make Iraq more like Kosovo; the dubious constituency of anti-globalization protesters; Kansas versus a pancake (Kansas wins)*

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

#### Mission Impossible?

When funds set aside for Iraq's reconstruction proved insufficient, President Bush pressed Congress for \$71 billion for security and rebuilding operations. (The President also requested \$16 billion for Afghanistan and other "war on terror" activities.) Yet despite mounting calls for more troops on the ground in Iraq, the Administration has remained steadfastly opposed to sending any. This could prove to be a serious mistake. During the war itself, the U.S. prevailed on the strength of technological and tactical superiority. But according to a new study by researchers at the RAND Corporation, who reviewed the seven previous U.S.-led nation-building exercises since World War II, one of the keys to successful nation building is large numbers of ground troops. For instance, consider the contrast between the relative success of such efforts in the Balkans and the slow, unsteady pace of reconstruction in post-conflict Afghanistan; the difference, the researchers found, is largely due to the fact that *fifty times* more soldiers per capita were deployed to Kosovo after the 1999 war than to Afghanistan after the 2001 conflict. For the United States to achieve a Kosovo-level per capita force presence in Iraq, it would have to deploy about 376,000 additional soldiers there. According to a recent Congressional Budget Office report, however, it's doubtful that the United States will even be able to sustain present force levels (about 150,000 soldiers) past 2004. In the best-case scenario, according to the CBO, only about 106,000 additional U.S. soldiers could be made available over the long term to rebuild Iraq—and a deployment of that size would further strain the already strained National Guard and reserve units.

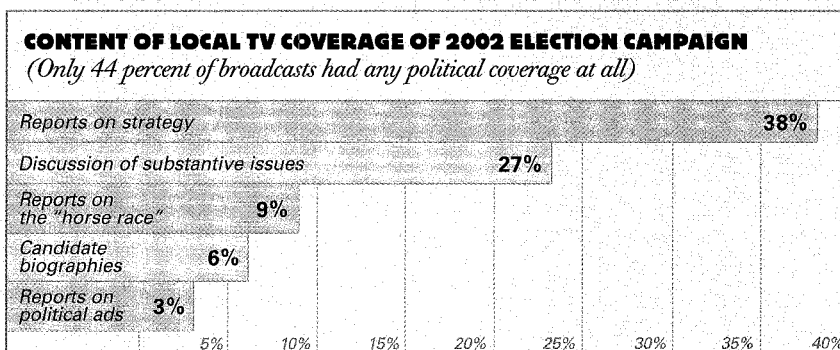
—"America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq," RAND Corporation; "An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain an Occupation of Iraq," Congressional Budget Office

### THE NATION

#### Politics (and Profits) on TV

In the nation's top fifty media markets during the seven weeks immediately preceding the November 2002 midterm election, more than half of all local television broadcasts gave no coverage whatsoever to political campaigns. As a result, according to researchers at the University of Southern California and the University of Wisconsin at Madison who examined more than 10,000 half-hour local television news broadcasts, most of the political information gleaned by local-news viewers came from paid advertisements: 80 percent of the broadcasts the researchers reviewed included at least one political advertisement; about half contained three or more ads. Another study, by the Alliance for Better Campaigns, suggests that although broadcasters ignore political campaigns in their news coverage, they are happy to exploit them for their revenue-generating potential: the price political candidates had to pay for television air time increased by 53 percent in the two months leading up to the November 2002 elections.

—"Local TV News Coverage of the 2002 General Election," Martin Kaplan (USC) and Ken Goldstein (UW Madison); "Profiteering on Democracy," Alliance for Better Campaigns



### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

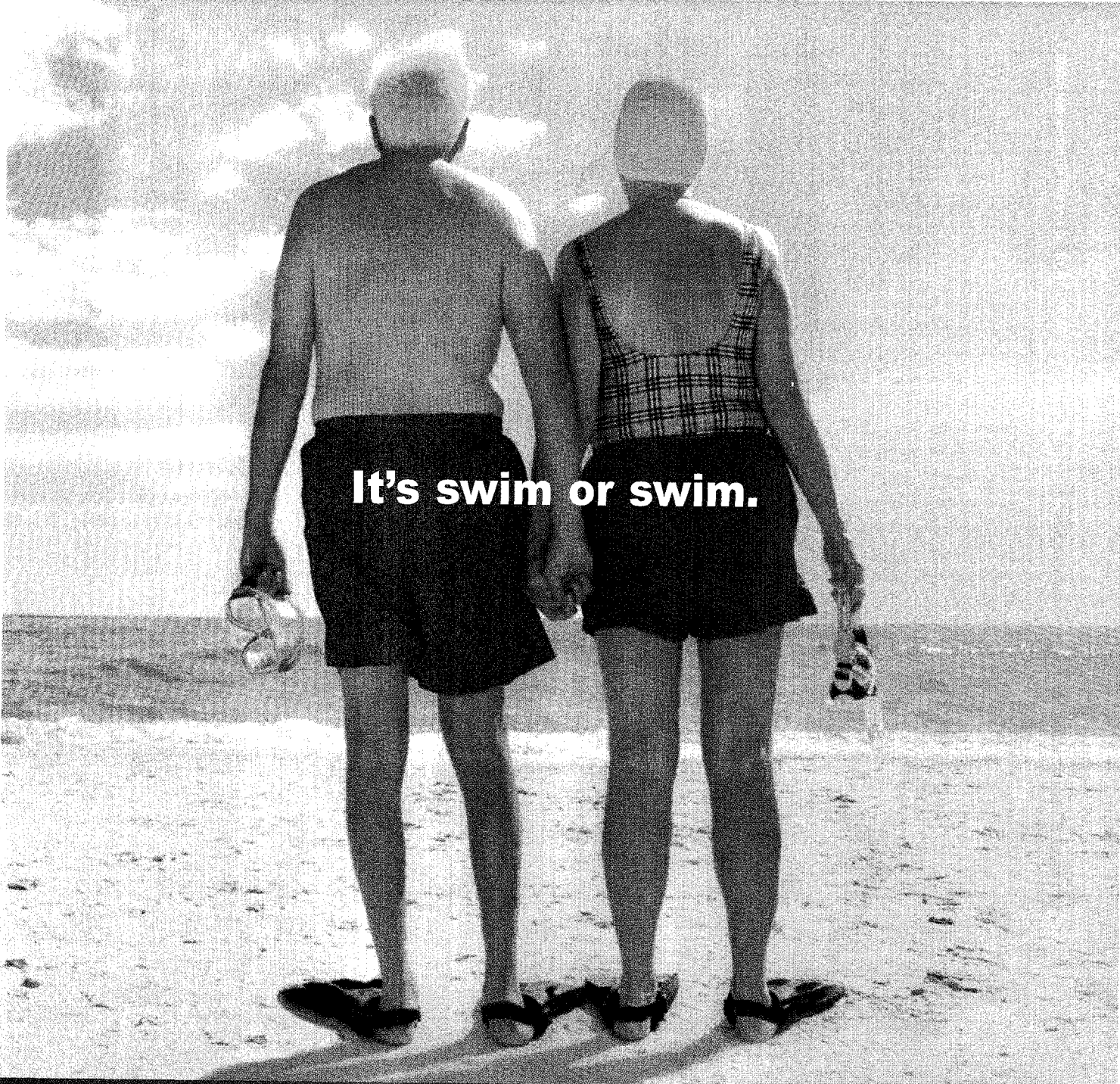
#### Premature Explanation

Seeking to assuage fears about the health threat posed by contaminated air at Ground Zero, the Environmental Protection Agency in the days immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks issued a series of press releases that played down the risks of bad air in Lower Manhattan. One release, dated September 18, stated simply, "The air is safe to breathe." But a recent report from the EPA's inspector general suggests that the agency didn't have enough information in September of 2001 to make such a blanket statement about health risks. Moreover, the report reveals, 25 percent of the dust samples taken between September 11 and September 18 in fact exhibited asbestos levels high enough to warrant serious health concerns. What accounts for the

agency's haste in reassuring the American public before the facts were known? White House meddling: according to the report, White House staff pressured the EPA into replacing cautionary language from drafts of early press releases with reassuring statements about air quality. If a report by Democrats on the House Committee on Government Reform is to be believed, the Bush Administration has not been shy about distorting scientific studies. The report documents numerous instances of the White House's "manipulating scientific advisory committees," "distorting and suppressing scientific information," and "interfering with scientific research and analysis."

—"EPA's Response to the World Trade Center Collapse," EPA, Office of the Inspector General; "Politics and Science in the Bush Administration," House Committee on Government Reform





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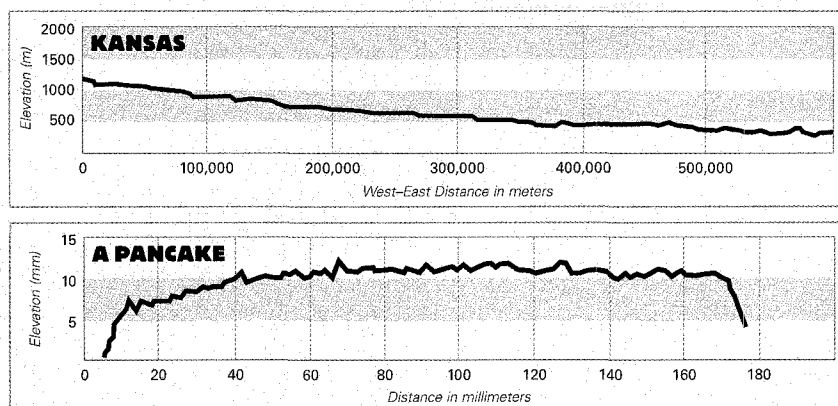
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## The Flapjack State

For truck drivers accustomed to the long, lonely trek across the Great Plains, it has for years been a truism that Kansas is flatter than a pancake. Recently geographers from Texas State and Arizona State Universities proved that this truism is, in fact, scientifically true. According to a study published in the *Annals of Improbable Research* (the successor to the now-defunct *Journal of Irreproducible Results*), researchers removed a two-centimeter-wide sample strip from a warm restaurant pancake. Viewing the sample through a high-powered microscope, they were surprised to find its surface quite rugged. But the proof of Kansas's superior flatness was in the numbers. Perfect, platonic flatness has a mathematical value of 1.000. Whereas the pancake sample scored a very flat 0.957, Kansas was clearly flatter, scoring 0.9997. Producing this finding, though, proved difficult for the researchers, because Kansas is so flat that the software they were using first reported its flatness to be a perfect 1.000—unlikely even for Kansas. Several hours' worth of further computer programming was required before the researchers could make a proper measurement and then agree on a technical description of Kansas's essential characteristic: "damn flat."

—"Kansas Is Flatter Than a Pancake," Mark Fonstad, William Pugatch, and Brandon Vogt



## ECONOMICS

### I Want My IMF

If past years are any indication, January's annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland, will draw a large crowd of youthful anti-globalization activists, most of them from rich Western nations, who say they are fighting on behalf of poorer populations. According to a recent survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, however, popular support for globalization is in fact strong in the developing societies that it supposedly impoverishes. Pew reports that on average, about 92 percent of respondents in sub-Saharan Africa and 85 percent of respondents in developing Asian

nations (such as Vietnam and Bangladesh) think growing trade and business ties are good for their countries. Majorities in most African and Asian nations also had positive impressions of multinational corporations, and of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. People in the developing world do share some of the anti-globalization protesters' concerns: the majority of those polled agree that the gap between rich and poor is growing while the availability of well-paying jobs is diminishing.

—"Views of a Changing World," Pew Global Attitudes Project

## Those Jobless Numbers

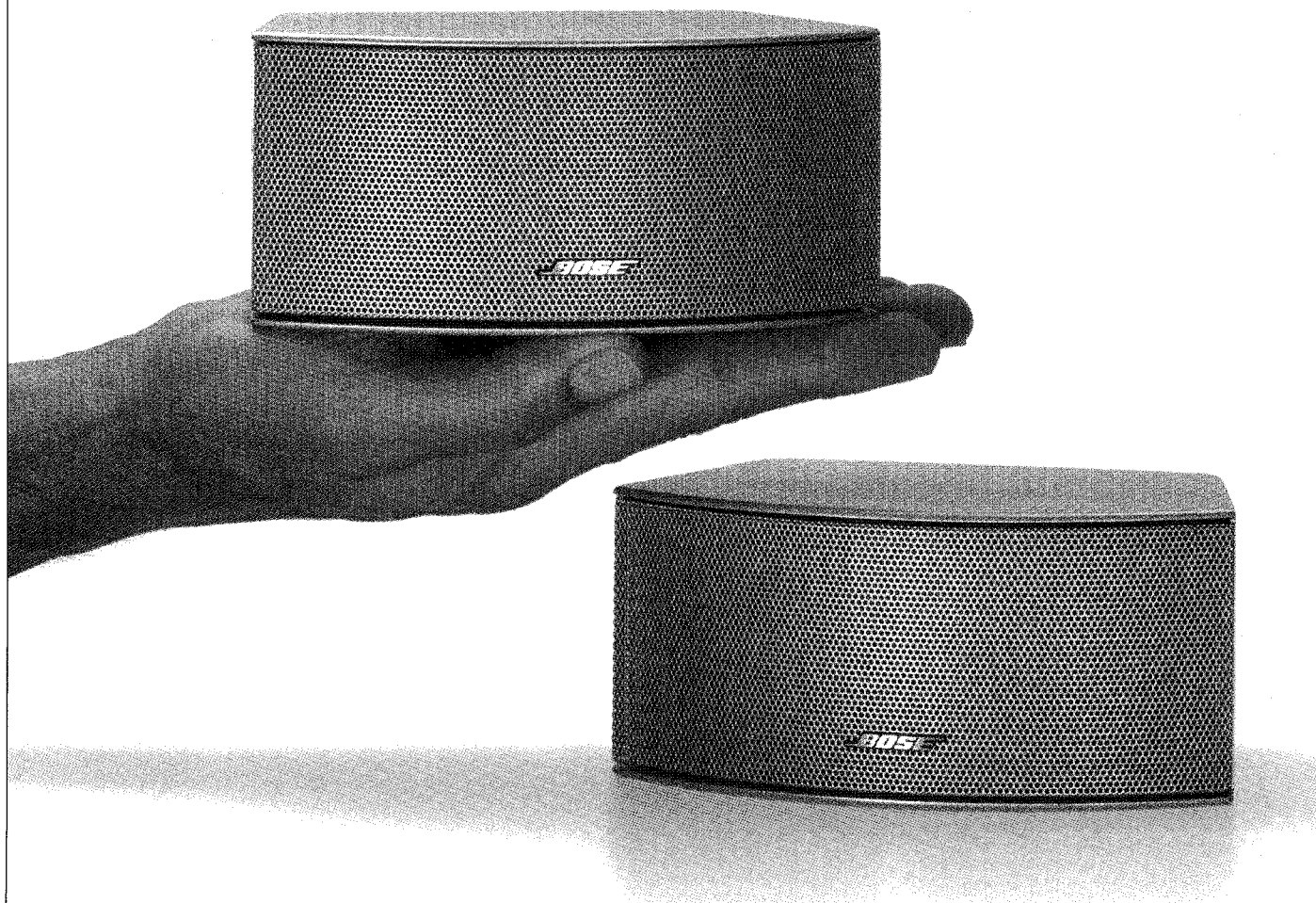
There's a good reason why today's unemployed are having a tough time getting back to work: in many cases their old jobs have simply vanished for good. According to a study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 79 percent of U.S. employment is now in industries undergoing "structural" job losses—meaning that employers have no plans to fill the positions they are cutting, even if the economy picks up. During previous downturns about half of the workforce was employed in industries going through cyclical unemployment, so more people who lost their jobs were likely to be rehired as companies ramped up their production. But structural job losses are harder for the labor market to recover from. Creating wholly new jobs involves more time and risk for companies than filling previously existing spots by recalling furloughed workers. And it's harder for laid-off workers to find new jobs (and to learn new skills) than to return to jobs they've previously held. Nevertheless, the report cautions that some concerns over the extent of recent job losses may be overblown. For one thing, unemployment rates remain relatively low compared to those seen in recent recessions. For another, discouraged workers—who are often cited as a source of "hidden" unemployment, because they've given up looking for work altogether and no longer appear in the government's official unemployment statistics—account for only six percent of those who have left the work force entirely since the recession began. Teenagers, who are now dropping out of school less frequently and devoting more time to studying during the summer, make up half of the hidden-unemployment total.

—"Has Structural Change Contributed to a Jobless Recovery?" Federal Reserve Bank of New York

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit  
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## NUCLEAR IRAN

*Iran's skillful manipulation of the international market for nuclear materials and knowledge illustrates the increasing difficulty of keeping nuclear weapons out of more hands*

In August of 2002 an Iranian opposition group disclosed the existence of two nuclear facilities in Iran: Natanz (see photo below) and Arak. (Natanz is capable of producing fissile material for nuclear weapons, and Arak will be soon; thirteen other countries have this capability, and seven of them are known to have nuclear weapons.) Earlier this year Iran tested a missile, apparently designed to hold a nuclear payload, that can reach Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Intelligence officials from a variety of countries have known for years that Iran has been developing a clandestine nuclear program; the developments above, among others, suggest that Iran may now have in place many if not all of the raw materials and tech-

nologies necessary to build and use nuclear weapons.

Throughout the development of its nuclear-weapons program Iran has relied on a large and growing international market. According to the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (the source of what is considered to be the most comprehensive publicly available information on the Iranian nuclear program), Iran has acquired materials and technology from at least thirty countries, many of them unwitting. (See map at right.) Collectively since 1979 they have provided tons of radioactive materials, myriad pieces of nuclear equipment, and the know-how to put all the pieces together.

Some of these countries are unsurprising: Russia, China, and North Korea have been most heavily involved, providing all six types of assistance essential to the production and delivery of nuclear weapons. (See map key.) But Iran has also found the West to be a willing partner.

A number of the transactions indicated on the map have been both legal

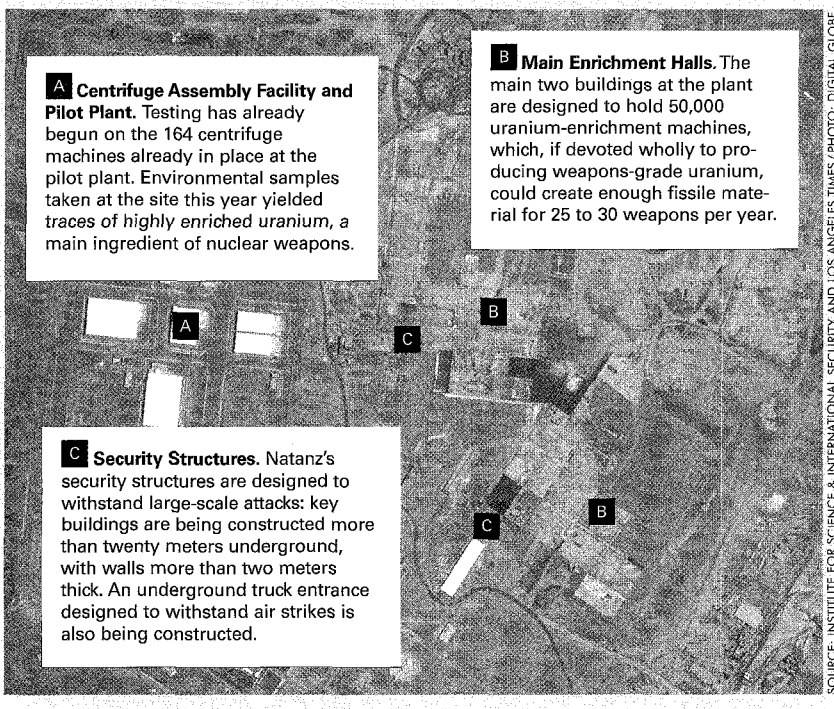
and open, particularly those involving raw or fuel-grade nuclear materials. The Non-Proliferation Treaty allows the safeguarded importation of materials intended for a civilian nuclear-energy program, and therefore creates a large umbrella under which Iran can legally import sensitive technology; surprisingly, even the transfer of highly enriched uranium or plutonium to Iran is legal.

Most countries with such technologies have nonetheless attempted to limit the sale of goods that can be used to develop a nuclear-weapons program, but Iran has circumvented such restrictions by smuggling and by making sophisticated use of front companies. At least twenty-three such companies have been identified by the Federation of American Scientists, and many more almost certainly remain unreported. French authorities recently identified an Iranian front company in the United Arab Emirates that was attempting to buy devices capable of reprocessing plutonium to high radioactive levels. Through a combination of legal transactions, front-company purchases, and smuggling, Iran has also acquired uranium, enrichment components, or weapons parts from, among others, the United States, Britain, Japan, Italy, and even Israel—the most vocal opponent of the Iranian weapons program. In 1993 Iranian arms dealers bought a small airport in Hasenmoor, Germany, so that arms and components illegally acquired throughout Europe might be smuggled back to Iran.

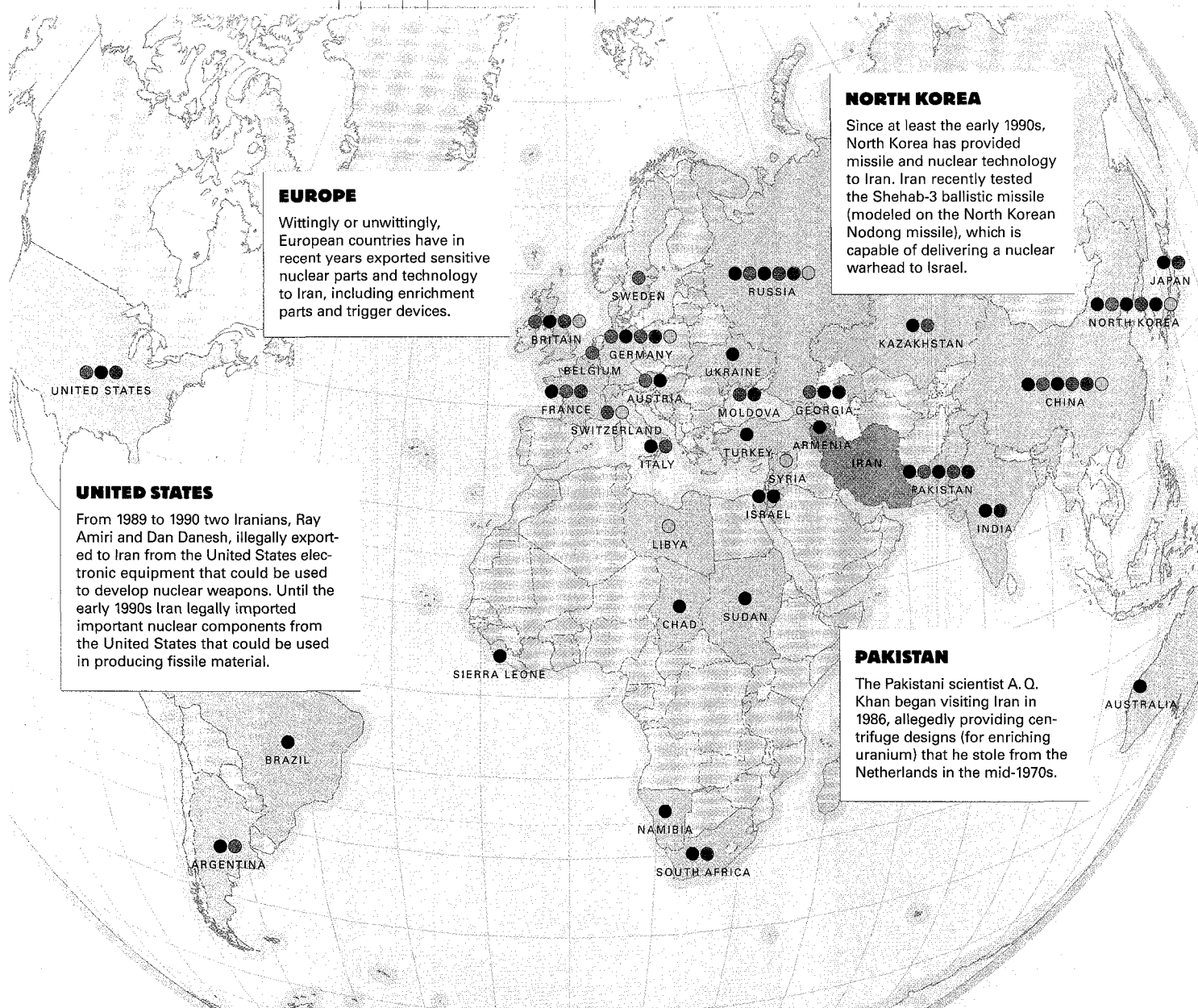
Iran's efforts have been greatly facilitated by the experience of other countries—most notably Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan have apparently worked together since signing a secret nuclear-weapons-cooperation agreement in 1986; Iran has reportedly offered Pakistan a total of \$3.5 to \$5 billion for expertise and parts. Although it denies having accepted the money, Pakistan has passed on information about how to set up anonymous procurement networks: specific smuggling routes, methods, and contacts, and rosters of Western compa-

### THE NATANZ NUCLEAR FACILITY

*The Natanz site is the first large-scale uranium-enrichment facility to be discovered in Iran. Under construction since 2000, it may well be able to hold 1,000 centrifuges by the end of 2003, and could produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon by the end of 2005.*







#### IRAN'S IMPORT PATH TO NUCLEAR AUTONOMY, 1979–PRESENT

- **Nuclear Materials**  
Uranium (raw, enriched, and highly enriched), plutonium, and assorted chemicals for use in nuclear program
- **Fissile-Material Production**  
Components used to produce weapons-grade uranium or plutonium
- **Fissile-Material Technology**  
Know-how to produce weapons-grade uranium or plutonium
- **Weapons Production**  
Components used to produce a nuclear weapon
- **Weapons Technology**  
Know-how to produce a finished nuclear weapon
- **Delivery Systems**  
Components and technology to produce ballistic missiles

*Note: Many of these components and technologies are "dual use," with applications in both civilian and military nuclear programs.*

nies that are easily approached for restricted parts and equipment.

Iran's most critical acquisition during the past twenty years has been knowledge; the country has exploited an international market in scientists that is nearly impossible to control. In the mid-1980s alone some 15,000 to 17,000 Iranian students were sent abroad for nuclear-related training. In addition to acquiring expertise these students established connections with scientists and technicians from Russia, Pakistan, and elsewhere.

Iran has actively recruited nuclear technicians from Russia and other poor countries since the early 1990s, offering salaries of up to \$5,000 a month. Reportedly, so many North Korean scientists are now in Iran, developing nuclear warheads and missiles, that a resort on the Caspian Sea has been set aside for their exclusive use. Iranian scientists allegedly made three secret visits to North Korea this year to garner advice on how best to conceal their country's weapons program from international inspectors.

Iran's path toward nuclear-weapons development has been neither quick nor easy; it has involved more than twenty years of concerted effort and organization, and a financial investment totaling tens of billions of dollars. Nevertheless, Iran's success illustrates just how difficult it is to prevent a truly committed state from acquiring nuclear-weapons capability—and how much more difficult it becomes with the advent of each new nuclear power.

—TERRENCE HENRY



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# TOUR OF DUTY

*John Kerry in Vietnam*

BY DOUGLAS BRINKLEY

.....

As he campaigns for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination, Senator John F. Kerry often cites his experience as a U.S. Navy patrol-boat skipper in Vietnam as a formative element of his character. Next month the historian Douglas Brinkley will publish the first full-scale, intimate account of Kerry's Navy career. In writing that account Brinkley has drawn on extensive interviews with virtually everyone who knew Kerry well in Vietnam, including all but one of the men still living who served under him. Kerry also turned over to Brinkley his letters home from Vietnam and his voluminous "war notes"—journals, notebooks, and personal reminiscences written during and shortly after the war. This material was provided without restriction, to be used at Brinkley's discretion, and has never before been published.

John Kerry enlisted in the Navy in February of 1966, months before he graduated from Yale. In December of 1967 Ensign Kerry was assigned to the guided-missile frigate USS *Gridley*; after five months of service in the Pacific, with a brief stop in Vietnam, he returned to the United States and underwent training to command a Swift boat, a small craft deployed in Vietnam's rivers. In June of 1968 Kerry was promoted to the rank of lieutenant (junior grade), and by the end of that year he was back in Vietnam, where he commanded, over time, two Swift boats. He received the Purple Heart three times for wounds suffered in action, and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Navy's Silver Star for gallantry in action. Kerry was discharged from the Navy in January of 1970, and soon became one of the most prominent spokesmen for the antiwar movement.

*Douglas Brinkley, a historian and biographer, is the director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies and a professor of history at the University of New Orleans. His most recent book is *Wheels for the World* (2003), a biography of Henry Ford. *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* will be published by William Morrow in January.*

The following excerpts are drawn from Douglas Brinkley's *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War*.



## AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE MOMENT

**O**n the afternoon of February 26, 1968, the twenty-four-year-old Ensign John Kerry was on watch on the bridge of the USS *Gridley*. His ship had just left Midway Island en route to the Philippines as part of a convoy that also included the USS *Turner Joy*, made famous by the August 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident. The *Gridley's* executive officer approached Kerry and asked if he had a friend named Pershing. There could be only one reason for the question, and Kerry did not want to hear it. His stomach went hollow, and he slumped onto a railing for balance. "I knew immediately it was all over but even when I read the telegram it took moments to sink in," Kerry wrote to his parents of the instant he learned—from his future wife Julia ("Judy") Thorne—that his close college friend Dick Pershing was dead. "Then I just ... cried—a pathetic and very empty kind of crying that turned into anger and bitterness. I have never felt so void of feeling before—so numb."

The dashing twenty-five-year-old Pershing, a second lieutenant with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division, had been killed in combat on February 17 near the hamlet of Hung Nhon, 400 miles north of Saigon. His platoon had been slogging through mud in search of a lost comrade when the ambush occurred. "Shift over to the left!" Pershing was said to have shouted as he tried to wave his men away from the danger. Just then a rocket-propelled grenade slammed into a dike a few feet in front of him, hurling Pershing into the air, his body torn apart by grenade fragments. He died instantly. The charmer of John Kerry's circle had become a statistic: another American soldier had given his life for his country.

Pershing's death brought out a profound sadness in Kerry. Memories of his liveliest friend kept flashing through his mind, especially of the boyish mischievousness that bordered on irresponsibility and had so perfectly balanced Kerry's serious leanings at Yale. In the pursuit of fun, nothing had been off-limits to Dick Pershing. Yet when it had come time for Pershing to serve, the life of the party had offered himself unhesitatingly. By the time he got to Vietnam, Pershing had remade himself into the perfect paratrooper, rock-solid in body and stalwart in spirit. And now he was gone—and for what? "Pershing's death was just one more major-league souring for John, of figuring out what the hell Vietnam was all about," explains David Thorne, another Yale classmate (and Julia's twin brother), who was still in Navy training off the coast of San Diego when he got the news. "Why did Dick have to die for this? That's what John wanted to know."

Kerry blamed the Johnson Administration. The very week Pershing was killed, General Earle G. Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made his eleventh

inspection tour of South Vietnam. Kerry suspected that Wheeler would return with the same message as always, telling the American people that their great nation was winning another war, and write up some overoptimistic reports for the White House. What Wheeler wouldn't mention was that 543 U.S. soldiers had been killed the week Pershing died. Nor would he note the 2,457 wounded.

It pleased Kerry, later, to learn that Dick Pershing had been buried next to his legendary grandfather, the World War I U.S. Army general John "Black Jack" Pershing, in a scenic spot in Arlington National Cemetery. That seemed right. It spoke of a great continuum of duty, honor, and country. But Kerry also could not help feeling that some in the Pentagon were doing their servicemen a lethal injustice by sending a new wave of young people to die in a conflict that at least a few in the Defense Department did not believe could be won—as Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's resignation in November of 1967 clearly indicated.

Once the fact of Pershing's death had sunk in, Kerry, as he tended to do, poured out his feelings on paper. "With the loss of Persh something has gone out of me," he wrote to his parents at the end of February. "Persch was an unbe-

**"There is a beast in me that keeps pushing me on saying Johnny you can't let go because of this—Johnny you find some sense from this—Johnny you are too strong to stop now—something keeps me going harder than before."**

lievable spark in all of us and we took for granted that we would always be together—go crashing through life in our unconquerable fashion as one entity. Now that is gone in one incomprehensible moment. Time will never heal this—it may alleviate—but it will never heal."

In a similar but even more passionate vein Kerry expressed his anguish in a letter to Judy Thorne.

There are so many ways this letter could become a bitter diatribe and go rambling off into irrational nothings. I don't know really where to begin—everything is so hollow and ridiculous, so stilted and so empty. I have never in my life been so alone with something like this before. I feel so bitter and angry and everywhere around me there is nothing but violence and war and gross insensitivity. I am really very frightened to be honest because when the news sunk in I had no alternatives but to carry on in the face of trivia that forced me to build a horrible protective screen around myself. Something that has never happened to my



feelings before. I could not even allow myself the right to think about what was happening as much as everything inside me wanted to. I was standing watch on the bridge when the executive officer called me over and after an ominous pause asked if I had a friend called Pershing. I just stood there frozen and then read your telegram knowing already in my heart the Godawful wasteful stupid thing that had happened ...

Right now everything that is superficial and emotional

time I have been gone, does it seem strange to say that I feel as though I have seen several years experience go by. Wherever we go we see B-52's flying overhead going and returning from strikes on the Guam-Vietnam route. Two aircraft carriers are now in port to reload ammunition, rest the crew, and repair airplanes and the talk is of pilots lost and [air] strikes that were successful for the number of lives taken or unsuccessful for the number of lives lost—both the same and both creating the same hole and sorrow

for some unsuspecting person somewhere. Small boats tear around the harbor practicing maneuvers, we train nearly every day for any eventuality. Everything is hot and fast—there is no joking like there was back in California. No matter where one is—no matter what job—you do not and cannot forget that you are at war and that the danger is ever present—that anyone could at some time for the same stupid irrational something that stole Persh be gone tomorrow.

#### “LET US ALONE”

A gentle wind blew across the harbor as Kerry's transport landed at the base of Monkey Mountain in the South Vietnamese port city of Danang. It was the spring of 1968. Kerry debarked anxious about the prospect of wandering around, yet quickly found himself at

ease: the echoes of its colonial past made Danang a much less alien landscape to him than, say, the Philippines had been. Overlying the architectural remnants of French colonial rule were the unmistakable marks of the American empire. The handiwork of U.S. construction firms such as Raymond International and Morrison-Knudsen appeared everywhere. B-52 long-range jet bombers howled across the sky to the northeast, and U.S. Army helicopters touched down to the west. Pentagon-issue sandbags were stacked near the water, in case the tide rose too high. To Kerry's surprise, he saw far more barbed wire than bamboo.

The Americanization of South Vietnam was inescapable. But what really caught Kerry's attention was a fifty-foot American-made aluminum patrol craft fast (PCF), commonly called a “Swift boat” after the acronym for “shallow water inshore fast tactical” craft. Originally created as a water taxi to serve the offshore oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, the boat had been adopted by the Navy and turned into a light, twenty-three-knot patrol vessel, armed with fifty-caliber machine guns and an eighty-one-millimeter mortar. The boat Kerry saw gleamed with the possibilities of JFK's PT-109. “Tied up to the same wharf we got off at was a small swift boat and I thought jealously of my own



*A patrol craft fast (PCF), or Swift boat, in Vietnam*

wants to give up and just feel sorry but I can't. I am involved in something that keeps pushing on regardless of the individual and which even with what has happened must, I know deep, deep down inside me, be coped with rationally and with strength. I do feel strong and despite emptiness and waste, I still have hope and confidence. There is a beast in me that keeps pushing me on saying Johnny you can't let go because of this—Johnny you find some sense from this—Johnny you are too strong to stop now—something keeps me going harder than before. Judy, if I do nothing else in my life I will never stop trying to bring to people the conviction of how wasteful and asinine is a human expenditure of this kind. I don't mean this in an all-consuming world saving fashion. I just mean that my own effort must be entire and thorough and that it must do what it can to help make this a better world to live in. I have not lost faith—on the contrary—I have gained a conviction and desire greater than ever before—and now, a sense of inevitability—a weighty fatalism that takes worry out of the small actions of late and makes the personal much more important.

The world I am part of out there is so very different from anything you, I, or our close friends can imagine. It is filled with primitive survival, with destruction of an endless always seemingly pointless nature and forces one to grow up in a fast—no holds barred fashion. In the small

PHOTOS: P. 47 RIGHT, PERSONAL COLLECTION OF JOHN KERRY; P. 47 LEFT & ABOVE, MICHAEL MEDEIROS



desires to have one," Kerry wrote in a letter to his parents. "This one apparently had been given to the Vietnamese navy and they were using it for coastal surveillance." He had already applied for Swift-boat duty and was awaiting his assignment orders. Seeing the boat only confirmed his ambition to train at the top-notch Coronado naval station, back in San Diego.

Kerry had little company in his wish to volunteer for Swift-boat school. A number of the men on the *Gridley* had already seen enough of combat, and preferred to stay out of harm's way to whatever extent possible.

As he walked along the Danang waterfront, Kerry was startled to see Maoist graffiti spray-painted on walls, and shocked by the gruesome sight of a pile of dead Vietcong awaiting mass burial. "The thoughts of what must have taken place turned my stomach," he wrote in a letter to his parents. For 2,000 years the Vietnamese had been warding off invaders—Chinese, French, Japanese—and now he was one of the latest wave, one of what the novelists Eu-

getting the feeling that their faces seemed to say go away and let us alone.

The main theme throughout Kerry's correspondence from Vietnam during that visit was how disturbing it felt to be an unwelcome soldier in a foreign land. What he found difficult to handle was the hostile stares at his uniform. One woman he met, who worked for the Red Cross, told him that more than a thousand Vietcong were living among them in Danang. Exaggerated or not, such reports made Kerry nervous, as he wrote home:

Wherever I went and young Vietnamese men would look at me I grew scared. There really was no way to tell who was who. You could be in a room with one and not know whether he was really a Charlie or not. It became easy to sense the distrust that must exist in the outlying areas. How could one really fight in the fields and know whether at any time the men beside you were not going to turn tail and train their guns on you. Whom did you begin to trust and where did you draw the line. Another ludicrous aspect of the war.

**"Wherever I went and young Vietnamese men would look at me I grew scared. There really was no way to tell who was who. You could be in a room with one and not know whether he was really a Charlie or not."**

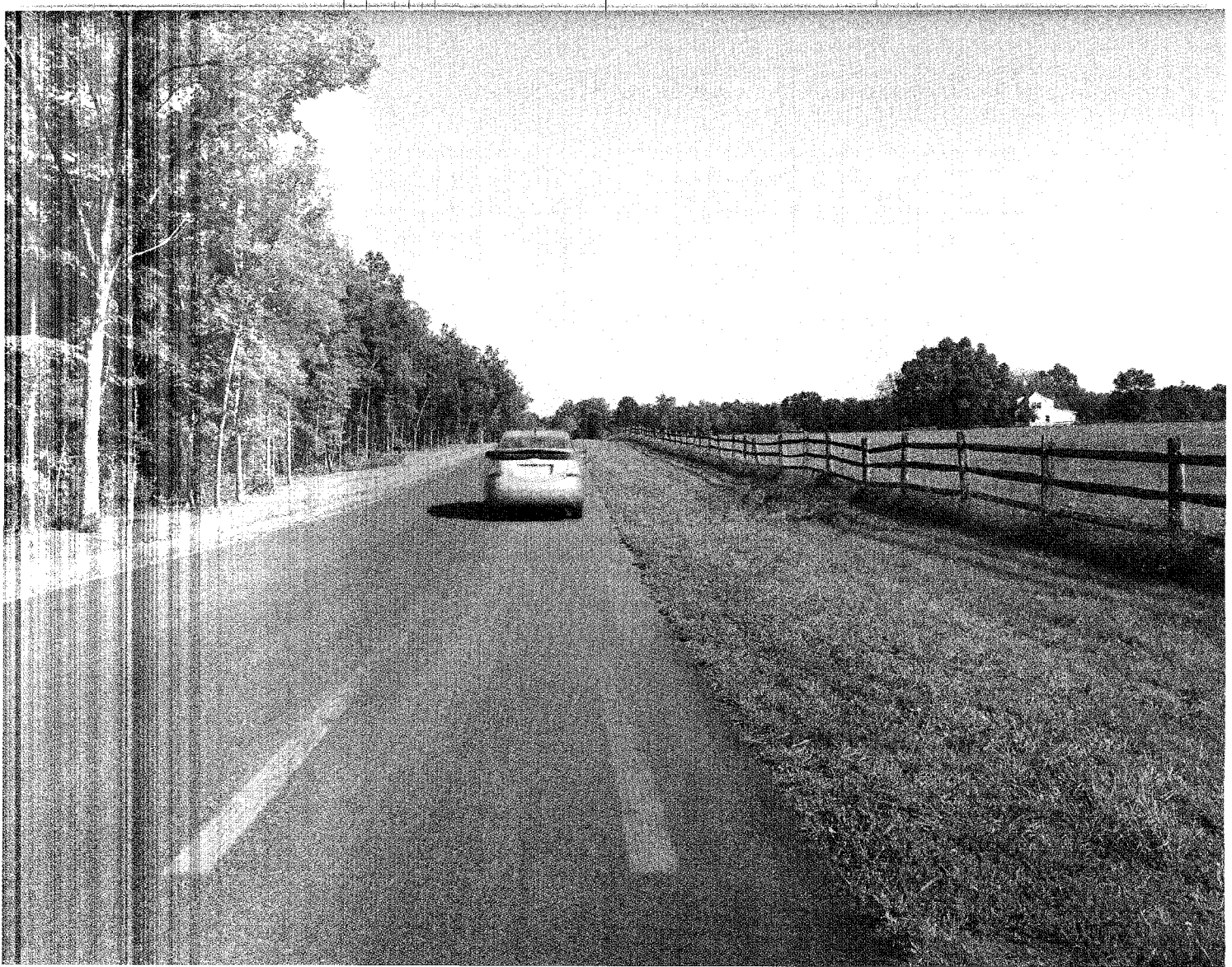
gene Burdick and William J. Lederer had called Ugly Americans in their 1958 book set amid the conflict in Southeast Asia. Kerry had read history books about how Vietnam's would-be conquerors had always been vanquished in the end, and it seemed to him inevitable that his own nation was next in line to lose. The first U.S. Marines had landed at Danang in March of 1965, and now, some three years later, the United States was already losing its grip. Kerry watched the local peasants matter-of-factly going about their business of cultivating rice as deadly explosions of U.S. ordnance echoed off the nearby Marble Mountains. His letter to his parents continued,

Every so often, there would be an open field where there were a few huts and people working in it with their pant trousers rolled up and their large hats covering up expressionless faces. How could these people really believe we are helping them? It seemed so utterly crazy—the idea of all this modern equipment fighting for an ideal that meant everything to those who were fighting but that could so obviously mean nothing to those ... whom the fighting was supposedly for. I know it is easy to be emotional but I can't help

#### THE BOUNTY HUNTERS

Kerry's first night on Mekong Delta river patrol found PCF-44, his first Swift boat, supporting a provincial reconnaissance unit (PRU), one of more than 200 such eighteen-man squads in a CIA-funded program aimed at destroying the Vietcong through assassination, kidnapping, and sabotage carried out by Vietnamese mercenaries. Paid four times what privates in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) received, plus hefty bounties per kill or captured prisoner or weapon, PRU members in many cases were hardened South Vietnamese criminals given a choice between life imprisonment and joining up; in others they were North Vietnamese and Vietcong defectors recruited for their willingness to do anything for a price. The commander of the PRU that Kerry's boat had been assigned to support boasted that five of his men had been decorated for bravery by Ho Chi Minh himself. Now, for money, they were shooting their former comrades-in-arms, local peasants, and anyone who broke curfew or trespassed. This policy of recruiting a mercenary army of proven traitors and vicious criminals instilled deep doubts in Kerry about the eventual success of the United States in Vietnam. The outright encouragement of enemy defections to the ARVN caused great resentment among many South Vietnamese army regulars, who were envious of the money lavished on the defectors by the U.S. government. Why should the regulars fight, if enemy deserters came out so far ahead? What's more, the regulars never knew if the defectors could be trusted—many defectors, in fact, later returned to the





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Vietcong. If "Vietnamization"—the phasing out of U.S. forces as their responsibilities were turned over to the South Vietnamese—meant stacking the army with enemy sympathizers, it hardly seemed likely that the South Vietnamese would ever be able to sustain, much less win, the war on their own.

Kerry wondered about all of this as he and his crew helped the mostly ex-Vietcong of the PRU land in a supposed guerrilla stronghold on his Swift's opening night in the riverine war. After the PRU had disappeared into the dense mangrove trees lining the bank, Kerry beached his boat on the mud, just a few hundred yards downstream from where the unit had landed. "There we sat silently, waiting to help if called upon," he wrote later in his war notes. "Hours passed slowly by. Then, late at night, a red flare shot into the sky from the PRU's position. It meant 'Emergency Extraction'—get the PRU's out as fast as possible." Two patrol boat river craft (PBRs) that were anchored close by also sprang into action. Before Kerry and his crew could get their Swift off the mud, "the PBRs had disappeared up a small estuary." The skipper of one was on the radio shouting to headquarters, "Emergency Extraction requested—moving in now—Emergency Extraction requested."

The Swift boat's young lieutenant had scant idea what he and his men were supposed to do. "The disorganization

was incredible," Kerry wrote in his war notes. "We had never worked with the PBR's before. The Operation Order given to us that morning contained no contingencies for Swift boats." Kerry's Swift came under fire, but the crew couldn't tell from where. In the rush to get out of there, the boat ran aground. Finally the PBRs reappeared. Kerry's account of that night's events continued.

They had a sampan in tow and were moving very slowly, confident that the shooting was over for the evening. [Boatswain's Mate Stephen W.] Hatch nursed the Swift alongside the PBR. I jumped aboard to talk with the Chief Petty Officer in charge. "What happened?" "The PRU's were patrolling through the area when they came on a hut with two people in it. Man and a woman. PRU's went in and found the woman writing a letter to her VC boyfriend. So they took 'em into custody. As they were comin back they spotted a sampan with four people in it. They took 'em under fire and that's it." It seemed like an every day occurrence to him. "Were the people killed?" I ventured timidly. "Hell yes. PRU's don't miss when they shoot."

"But the people in the sampan didn't fire or anything?" Just shooting them seemed incredible.

The Chief talked on. "Doesn't matter. They shouldn'a been there. Besides, one of the PRU's says they had guns but that the sampan tipped over and the guns were lost in the water."

Then, Kerry wrote, he looked over at the young woman

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they had detained, "who was squatting in the rear of the PBR."

She was defiant. She sat very calmly, watching the movements of the men who had just blown four of her countrymen to bits. She glared at me. I wondered about her boyfriend who was fighting us somewhere else. The PBR crew said that the men in the sampan got what they had coming to them but I felt a certain sense of guilt, shame, sorrow, remorse—something inexplicable about the way they were shot and about the predicament of the girl. I wanted to touch her and tell her that it was going to be all right but I didn't really know that it would be. Besides, she wouldn't have accepted my gesture with anything but scorn. I looked away and did nothing at all which was really all I could do. I hated all of us for the situation which stripped people of their self respect.

Kerry returned to his boat, and as it moved out to the Soi Rap River, he looked back and saw the PRU mercenaries talking animatedly, no doubt discussing the lucrative killing they had just done.

One of them mimicked the expression and the position that one of the dead had assumed at the instant he had become one of the dead. It had been easy. No shot had been fired at them. Besides, the dead didn't matter at all. They were now just four more casualties of war. The United States would now pay each of the PRU's X number of dollars for the people they had killed. And the total body count was now four higher than before.

## DEATH OF A TIGER SCOUT

No matter how mentally conditioned a soldier may feel for combat, nothing prepares him psychologically for the sight of a violent death. Although John Kerry had heard about the deaths of many men in Vietnam, including Dick Pershing and others he had known in Boston and New Haven and Newport and San Diego, he did not actually see a man die firsthand until December 29, 1968. On that day he was taking his gunner's mate, Stephen Gardner, who had suffered a shrapnel wound to his arm, to the U.S. Army's Third Surgical Division. After their arrival at the makeshift hospital at Dong Tam, they came upon a handful of seriously wounded young South Vietnamese soldiers. Kerry wrote about one of these soldiers in his war notes.

He was Vietnamese. I didn't know his name. Nobody in the tent did, I think. He was completely nude and his bony, minute body was stretched out on the brown plastic mat covering the operating table. Figures in green pushed in and out through the two doors which marked the pre-operating section of the Third Surgical Division, U.S. Army. An eerie, fluorescent light shone down on his face. His chest moved up and down without rhythm and with very little strength, sucking breath in slow gasps. My eyes darted between the operating table and a huge plastic tube for air-conditioning which ran across the overhead. It dominated all the other sceptic [sic] trimmings of the emergency ward.

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I watched while a young medic worked to prepare a fourth pint of blood for transfusion. With a pump like those used to take blood pressure, he would squeeze the blood through a plastic tube and into the half-dead Vietnamese. Now and then the Vietnamese's feet would twitch and his arm would try to move up towards his head, movements which were strangely disconnected from the rest of his body and from normality.

I will call him Nguyen. He was a Tiger Scout, a fore-runner for one of the platoon of infantrymen at Dong Tam, the Ninth Infantry headquarters. Someone whispered to me that he had been hit by a booby trap. Someone else said it was gunfire. No one knew obviously. From where I was I could see his neck bleeding. His head was arched back and his eyes, only half open and dazed, were searching for something. There was nothing close here for this man—his was a moment of complete loneliness, I thought. No one to hold on to. No one to talk to because he could not speak English and we could not speak Vietnamese and how, anyway, does one bridge the gap at a moment like this?

His left hand was wrapped in gauze. The gauze had turned almost completely red. A pool of blood had gathered on the table below the green army stretcher on which he lay. Everywhere there was blood pouring out of him. Even the transparent, plastic splints around both legs had assumed a red tint. I felt weak. My stomach began to twist and sweat poured all over me. I sat down on the floor because I thought I was going to be sick.

Suddenly Nguyen's right arm moved straight out, grasping towards the door. He grunted desperately. A doctor quickly took his pulse and his blood pressure. His toes, sticking out from the plastic splints, twinkled back and forth. He tried to raise his head and look—perhaps ask something—perhaps a last twinge of fight—and then he was quiet. His right hand, still reaching, came down slowly onto his chest and his other arm, bandaged and absent, lolled over the side of the stretcher. Nguyen was gone. No words. No cry.

It seemed absurd—a man dying alone in his own country. I wanted to cry but I thought that I couldn't let myself and so tears just welled up in my eyelids. Now I wonder why I didn't and I'm sorry.

Nguyen's corpse was carried from the room. A nurse came in and with large wads of gauze mopped up the pools of blood darkening on the table. When the fluffy white wads turned to sodden red sponges, she tossed them into a nearby container and readied the table for the next patient.

After Gardner's x-rays were taken at Dong Tam, he and Kerry were directed across a helicopter pad to a building that housed an enormous outpatient clinic. While a surgeon cut into Gardner's arm, Kerry walked around and watched the streams of wounded coming in. The lines reminded him of those that he and his fellows had all waited in for physical examinations at boot camp, but instead of unscarred young recruits, here the queues consisted of patients with bloody bandages wrapped around their heads, legs, arms, chests, or stomachs. Kerry wrote in his war notes,

At the entrance to the building were boots and combat packs which were covered with mud, still wet. Some of the mud was mixed with red streaks of blood. Only minutes earlier those packs and boots had been stalking Viet Cong in a rice paddy or along a path a few miles away. Now the men who had worn them were waiting in the building to have someone dig around in their muscle to pull out pieces of grenades and bullets.

While Kerry was waiting, Nguyen's remains were carried out. Kerry watched in silence as the medics struggled to get the body into one of the dark-green rubber body bags used to transport the dead from battlefield to morgue. This body, like all the bodies Kerry would see in Vietnam, had taken on a surprisingly cumbersome, waxy quality; it rolled "uncontrollably" as the medics tried to lay it in the body bag. Then they zipped the bag up and Nguyen was gone, driven away to be buried along a riverbank somewhere in the land he had died for.



*John Kerry, on the right*

#### ZUMWALT AND ABRAMS

Like many of the junior U.S. Navy officers who applied for Swift-boat duty, John Kerry had assumed that he would be assigned mostly to relatively safe coastal patrols off South Vietnam. A month before he arrived back in-country to begin his second tour of duty, however, the Swift-boat mission had changed into far more dangerous riverine assaults on the Vietcong in the Mekong Delta. The new Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River, and Delta Strategy—Operation SEALORDS—launched in November of 1968, just after then Vice Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. took over the U.S.–South Vietnamese “brown-water navy.” On January 22, 1969, some twenty Swift-boat officers from Coastal Divisions Eleven and Thirteen got a chance to air their views about the new policy at

PERSONAL COLLECTION OF JOHN KERRY



a very high level. They were flown to Saigon for a most unusual meeting with Admiral Zumwalt and U.S. Army General Creighton W. Abrams Jr., the overall commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).

Upon arriving at the air base at Tan Son Nhut, MACV's headquarters on the outskirts of Saigon, the officers were driven to Vice Admiral Zumwalt's residence. To a history-minded junior officer like John Kerry, Zumwalt was already a legend at age forty-eight. He had graduated seventh in his class (1942) after just three years at the U.S. Naval Academy. Rushed into World War II service, he was assigned to

about twenty minutes and about the only impressive thing was the fact that we had been flown to Saigon to be exhortated by a four star general and the commanding officer himself. I turned with a questioning look to the officer next to me when it was over and we wondered together without saying anything what it was that we were meant to garner from this exhibition.

Kerry was hardly the only skeptic at the so-called Saigon summit. "They tried to pump us up," recalled his fellow lieutenant (junior grade) Bill Shumadine, who had been skippering Swifts in-country since June of 1968. "They didn't

ask for our advice." Reflecting back on the event decades later, another lieutenant (junior grade) recalled the snowballing of dissent that had led to the meeting in the first place. "Our division commanders had grown tired of hearing their officers express concern about our mission," he explained. "Collectively, at least most of us felt that running rivers, showing the flag, and shooting things up was too imprecise. We were creating negative feeling among the good guys, the Vietnamese who farmed and fished and tried to raise a family. We wanted to win the people over, not have them hate us for destroying everything in sight."

**"At the entrance...were boots and combat packs...Only minutes earlier those packs and boots had been stalking Viet Cong...Now the men who had worn them were waiting...to have someone dig around in their muscle to pull out pieces of grenades and bullets."**

the USS *Robinson*, a destroyer that saw action in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. He was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service during a torpedo attack. He displayed similar valor while serving aboard the USS *Wisconsin* during the Korean War. Fiercely intelligent, hardworking, and exceptionally open-minded, Zumwalt was to become the youngest four-star admiral in American history. In September of 1968, just two months before Kerry returned to South Vietnam to command a Swift boat, Zumwalt had been given responsibility for the soon-to-be-launched riverine strategy. The aim was to strangle the Vietcong by choking off their waterborne supply network from North Vietnam and Cambodia.

That day at his residence Zumwalt faced a score of young officers who were in awe of him—but some of whom were angry, too. Kerry's war notes captured the moment.

The admiral took the stand and introduced General Abrams after we had been given permission to sit down and we listened with open ears for whatever special word the "man" himself could give us. For several weeks there had been conjecture that a major change in strategy was due and that we were going to be cut in on it here. But no. The general, in his portly manner, talked to us about the conduct of the war and told us how what we were doing was terribly important to the war effort. He congratulated us and expressed his admiration and then exhorted us to carry on and continue in our present vein. The talk lasted

What Kerry, Shumadine, and the other junior officers could not have known was that General Abrams—who had served as a tank commander under General George S. Patton in World War II—himself harbored deep-seated worries about the progress of the war. It troubled Abrams that every day, it seemed, the deadlines for what would become known as Vietnamization were being moved up as the U.S. government became more and more anxious to get out of Vietnam.

The Saigon summit did not leave the contingent of junior officers either less peeved or very impressed with Abrams; they were, however, glad to be informed that they might be getting Army helicopter support for their river runs. Kerry wrote,

Once the general had left we were shown over to the main part of the Naval Forces Vietnam Headquarters and there we were given an intelligence briefing. Again, we met with nothing that we didn't know and I suspect that any member of the officer corps in the division could have stood up and given a better presentation with no preparation at all. At the end of it, the admiral came back in and made a few more remarks—to the effect that the general had been very impressed with the cut ... of the men he had spoken to. The admiral [said he had] replied that he felt that in that room was a future Chief of Naval Operations which seemed strange to me because almost everyone that I knew was planning to get out. Perhaps the admiral was referring to himself?



After completing his remarks, Zumwalt opened the floor to questions. One officer asked the vice-admiral about Marine Lieutenant Colonel William Corson's book *The Betrayal* (1968), which argued that the United States would lose the war if it continued to prop up what Corson considered an utterly corrupt Saigon regime. "The people smell the decay of [the government's] corruption," Corson wrote, "which permeates all of South Vietnam and makes a joke out of activities urged by the United States in the name of promoting a democratic society." Zumwalt somewhat obliquely claimed that he had not read Corson's book, and then snapped, "First off, you've got to consider the source." He leveled a glare that said, "You'd better not have a follow-up question, buddy." Then John Kerry had a question. As he wrote in his war notes,

I asked how, if our job was ostensibly interdiction of the movement of supplies, they could justify offensive actions such as we had been sent on—attempts to draw the enemy into ambush and then destroy his ambush capability. He said that the purpose was to show the American flag—an answer that seemed very strange to me when I consider that it was the Vietnamese flag that we were supposed to be fighting for. Why didn't we show their flag or better yet, let them run up the rivers and show their own flag? Many friends of mine in the Marines told me about their operational orders and necessity for artillery wherever they go. The admiral went on to say that he knew Navy men found it hard to go out and find the enemy but that the army did it all the time and that we should get used to it. I wanted to point out that the army was equipped and trained differently than us and that they had some form of support beyond that which we had but then I thought better of it and silence was the better part of virtue.

After some more grilling the vice-admiral was finally rescued by an aide, who made a few remarks about the unavoidability of killing innocent people in Southeast Asia. Zumwalt declared this normal—the fortunes of war, as it were—and to be expected. Then he went on to laud the actions of a boat driver in Danang who had stumbled on some Vietcong near the coast of the Batangan Peninsula and killed them all. This was the aggressive kind of officer the riverine war needed. The aide "started quoting Winston Churchill, telling us Coastal Division Eleven was doing the most important work in the U.S. Navy," one of Kerry's fellow officers, Larry Thurlow, later recalled. "We all looked at each other and thought, 'What is this crap?'"

Kerry wrote in his war notes,

I left this whole Saigon operation just a little bit sicker and a little bit more depressed than when I came. Even the intelligence officer there told us he thought that what we were doing was a mistake but he couldn't control his boss and that was that. The unfortunate thing about advisors is that they tend to tell the advised what they want or need to hear—particularly if they want to move up.

## A CHILD IS KILLED

The Vietcong were not easily frightened—and not easily recognized. The battlefield was everywhere in Vietnam, and the enemy was sometimes a barefoot child carrying a bomb in a satchel. As a result, for the most part the rule on a Swift boat was "better safe than sorry." Every Asian was seen as a potential sniper. If a noise came from the thick mangrove brush on a riverbank, it was deemed wiser to spray the area with machine-gun fire than to make a closer investigation. And if in doing so one accidentally killed a civilian, it was better to keep it to oneself.

One of the most horrific moments of Kerry's tour in Vietnam occurred one day toward the end of winter, when the second Swift boat he commanded, PCF-94, and another Swift were patrolling the Cua Lon River in the southwestern delta region. The night was pitch-black, neither Swift's search or boarding lights were working properly, and both boats kept getting stuck on the bottom of a shallow channel. "Many minutes of silent patrolling had gone by when one of the men yelled sampan off the port bow," Kerry wrote in his war notes.

Everybody froze and we slowed the engines quickly. But the sampan was already by us and wasn't stopping. It was

"We moved in closer to see the limbs of a small child limp on the sacks of rice... when one of the men asked me if I wanted it uncovered I said no realizing that the face would stay with me for the rest of my life."

past curfew and nothing was allowed on the river. I told the after gunner to fire a few warning shots and in the confusion all the guns opened up. We moved in on the sampan and taking one of the battle lanterns off the bulkhead shone it on the silhouette of the craft that was now dead in the water.

Technically, the two Swifts had done nothing wrong. The sampan, operating past curfew, was undeniably in a free-fire zone. What's more, there had been several incidents of people in sampans trying to get close enough to U.S. Navy vessels to toss bombs into their pilothouses. But knowing they were following official Navy policy didn't make it any easier for the crews to deal with what they saw next. "The light revealed a woman standing in the stern of the sampan with a child of perhaps two years or less in her arms," Kerry wrote.

Neither [was] harmed. We asked her where the men from the stern were as one of the gunners was sure that he had

seen someone moving back there. She gesticulated wildly and I could see traces of blood on the engine mounting. It was obvious that they had been blown overboard. Then someone said that there was a body up front and we moved in closer to see the limbs of a small child limp on the sacks of rice. She had already covered it and when one of the men

troubled by the callous attitude he perceived coming from the top U.S. brass. Worse, it seemed to be trickling down into the enlisted ranks among men eager for promotions. He wrote in his war notes,

The popular view was that somehow "gooks" just didn't have very much personality—they were ignorant "slopeheads," just peasants with no feelings and no hopes. I don't think this was true among most of the officers and this made me wonder how much of it was feigned among the enlisted so that they would look good in the eyes of their more chauvinistic comrades.

Kerry was fortunate never to have a man of that disturbing ilk among his crew. He commanded five men on each of his boats. They could hardly have been more diverse in background, age (ranging from nineteen to thirty-seven), education, point of origin, or anything else except distance from their Yale-grad skipper's privileged upbringing.

"I know that most of my friends felt absolutely

absurd going up a river holding a loaded weapon that was supposed to be used against someone who had never really done anything to you and on whose land you were now trespassing," Kerry wrote. "I had always felt that to kill, hate was necessary and I certainly didn't hate these people." In truth, he added, scanning the shore for suspicious movements to shoot at made him "feel like the biggest ass in the world." Kerry had explored similar feelings in a letter to his parents in December of 1968. Describing the sight of American soldiers and their Vietnamese girlfriends strolling down the streets of the U.S. rest-and-recreation-center city of Vung Tau one sunny afternoon, he reflected on the crucial difference between occupiers and liberators of war-torn places. "I asked myself what it would be like to be occupied by foreign troops—to have to bend to the desires of a people who could not be sensitive to the things that really counted in one's country," Kerry wrote in that letter. He had been considering Germany's occupation of France during World War II, he added, when "a thought came to me that I didn't like—I felt more like the German than the doughboy who came over to make the world



*John Kerry, far right, and some of the crew of PCF-94*

asked me if I wanted it uncovered I said no realizing that the face would stay with me for the rest of my life and that it was better not to know whether there was a smile or a grimace or whether it was a girl or a boy.

Almost every American who served in Vietnam witnessed or heard about innocents' getting killed. The civilian casualties would haunt the consciences of many veterans, including John Kerry. It was impossible to rectify or rationalize a mistake that resulted in such a death. "The child was still dead," Kerry wrote of the accident on the Cua Lon River, "and we had done it."

#### "GOOD HUNTING? GOOD CHRIST"

The longer he was in the Mekong Delta river system, the more Kerry's war notes reflected a distrust of his direct superiors. He also grew more and more uncomfortable with the tacit assumption that an American life was worth so much more than a Vietnamese life. Although he never saw the slightest evidence of bigotry, hatred, or cruelty of any kind in any of the men he served with on a Swift boat, or in any of his fellow Swift skippers, Kerry was

MICHAEL MEDEROS



safe for democracy and who rightfully had a star in his eye."

Less than three months later experience had brought him to another melancholy observation. He wrote in his war notes,

It was when one of your men got hit or you got hit yourself that you felt most absurd—that was when everything had to have a meaning in order for it all to be worthwhile and inevitably Vietnam just didn't have any meaning. It didn't meet the test. When a good friend was hit and perhaps about to die, you'd ask if it was worth just his life alone—let alone all the others or your own.

"But the ease with which a man could be brought to kill another man, this always amazed me," he went on. Even more troubling to him was the imprimatur the U.S. military accorded this coldheartedness. To illustrate his point, he referred to the messages that would come in from the brass at Cam Ranh, praising the Swifts' gunners whenever they had killed a few Vietcong, and ending "Good Hunting": "Good Hunting? Good Christ—you'd think we were going out af-

**"Good Hunting? Good Christ—you'd think we were going out after deer or something—but here we were being patted on the back and receiving hopes that the next time we went out on a patrol we would find some more people to kill. How cheap life became."**

ter deer or something—but here we were being patted on the back and receiving hopes that the next time we went out on a patrol we would find some more people to kill. How cheap life became."

#### THE HOSTAGE

On several occasions Kerry's Swift boat was assigned to transport South Vietnamese forces drawn from the Nung, an ethnic minority group. Many Nung fought as mercenaries with U.S. and ARVN troops against the Vietcong. On March 12, 1969, Kerry's Swift boat and three others were ordered to take a squad of Nung mercenaries and a Green Beret adviser up a small canal and drop them off in a designated spot. The plan was for the Nung to sweep through the area, which was said to harbor a Vietcong tax-collection station, and then rejoin the Swifts a mile or so away. As the mercenaries made their way into the jungle, Kerry took his boat upstream to investigate an area that he and his crew had raided several weeks earlier. To his amazement, as the boat drew near, the crew could smell

food cooking on open fires; the people had already moved back in. "It seemed to me to be testimony to the futility of what we were doing," Kerry wrote.

After some more reconnaissance the Swifts moved over to the rendezvous point. Called the north/south canal for lack of any other distinction, the narrow waterway joined the Cua Lon and Bay Hap Rivers, and along its banks Vietcong ambushes had already taken their toll. The setup was ideal: wooden fish stakes placed at irregular intervals required very slow and careful navigation through a space narrower than a single-lane highway. Lieutenant Larry Thurlow's boat went through first, whereupon a mine exploded off its right bow, giving the boat a good shake but causing no real damage. Kerry's boat, meanwhile, had stayed on the beach just down the canal to wait with another Swift positioned there for the Nung troops to emerge from the jungle. When the crews heard the explosion, however, they rushed to their stations and then moved upstream to help. Kerry's was the first Swift to reach Thurlow's, which

approached from the other direction; the two met bow to bow on either side of the line of fish stakes spanning the long, thin canal. As they neared each other, the Swifts came under automatic-weapon fire from one of the banks. The bow gunner on Thurlow's boat was so distracted by pain from a wound that he didn't notice Kerry's boat coming and nearly pumped it full of machine-gun fire himself. "For some reason," Kerry wrote, "he looked up at the last moment and relaxed his finger on the trigger."

When the attack had been suppressed two of the Swifts left the scene with the wounded. Kerry's and the fourth stayed behind,

not by choice but because they couldn't leave without the Nung troops, who were still ashore, out of sight and also temporarily out of radio contact. "This was absurd," Kerry wrote afterward, "because not knowing where they were going to come out could trigger anybody's finger seeing as we were all jumpy anyway." When the Nung finally did appear, they came sprinting down to the waiting boats, shouting that someone had been chasing them the whole way. "The sergeant who was in charge of them had an old man with him as a hostage and we hustled him aboard too," Kerry wrote. "Then we screamed balls-to-the-wall out of there."

No sooner were they back out on the main river than the Swifts were ordered to return to the canal and redeposit the troops on the shore near the site of the ambush. The crews were exhausted and not much in the mood to go back. But the boats turned around.

They dropped off the Nung troops and moved off a little way, where they waited in case the ground squad called for assistance. At that point, Kerry wrote, the Nung's Green

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Beret adviser, who had remained aboard Kerry's boat, turned to him and said, "I wouldn't be surprised if our prisoner tries to escape or if he falls on some punji stakes in there." Kerry wrote,

For the first time I realized that they were planning to take the old man in with them to act as a human mine detector and also because he supposedly knew the area ... The certainty of his trying to escape or of his falling on some punji stakes didn't mean anything to me until later when I had thought about it and it dawned on me what they meant to do.

The Swifts waited on the canal for about an hour, Kerry wrote, "and then the very tired group of mercenaries made their way back to the boat."

**"It was when one of your men got hit or you got hit yourself that you felt most absurd—that was when everything had to have a meaning in order for it all to be worthwhile and inevitably Vietnam just didn't have any meaning. It didn't meet the test."**

They related to us how they had seen armed VC walking around with impunity but that because the VC had been well equipped and it was late in the day they [had] refrained from making contact. I noticed that the prisoner wasn't with them and the Green Beret winked at me when I asked and said that he had tried to escape. With a smile on his face they boarded the boats and we left the area. For a few nights I wondered about the man—not what—but how they had done it and then one night we got drunk back at the base and I found out that he had been knifed by one of the Nungs and then sliced up and left with a note of warning to the VC.

#### BOOTS AND PONCHO

The very next day Kerry's boat was sent with four others on yet another mission to insert mercenaries at a designated point and then pick them up after they had completed a sweep of the area. Kerry found the drop-off point, and the boats nosed in to a small clearing and started sending the troops ashore. Several minutes after all the Nung had disembarked, the crews heard a booming noise that echoed up the river valley. The squad leader's voice came on the radio and said, "Can you come back in here and pick up a body. I've got one of my boys killed by a booby trap." That was all.

Again Kerry piloted the boat into the bank, where with

one of his men, Michael Medeiros, and a few others he went ashore to retrieve the remains of the mercenary, whose name was Bac She De. He was someone they all knew. The squad leader radioed the exact location of the body. "Is it bad?" Kerry asked. The officer replied that Bac She De could be put in "a bucket." The Americans walked on gingerly to avoid triggering another booby trap. "I was almost fearing that Bac She De might suddenly appear and scare the living shit out of me," Kerry wrote in his war notes. "There is nothing worse than approaching a dead body when you don't know exactly what you're going to find."

About fifty yards down the path Kerry and Medeiros came upon the crumpled remains of Bac She De. "I never want to see anything like it again," Kerry wrote.

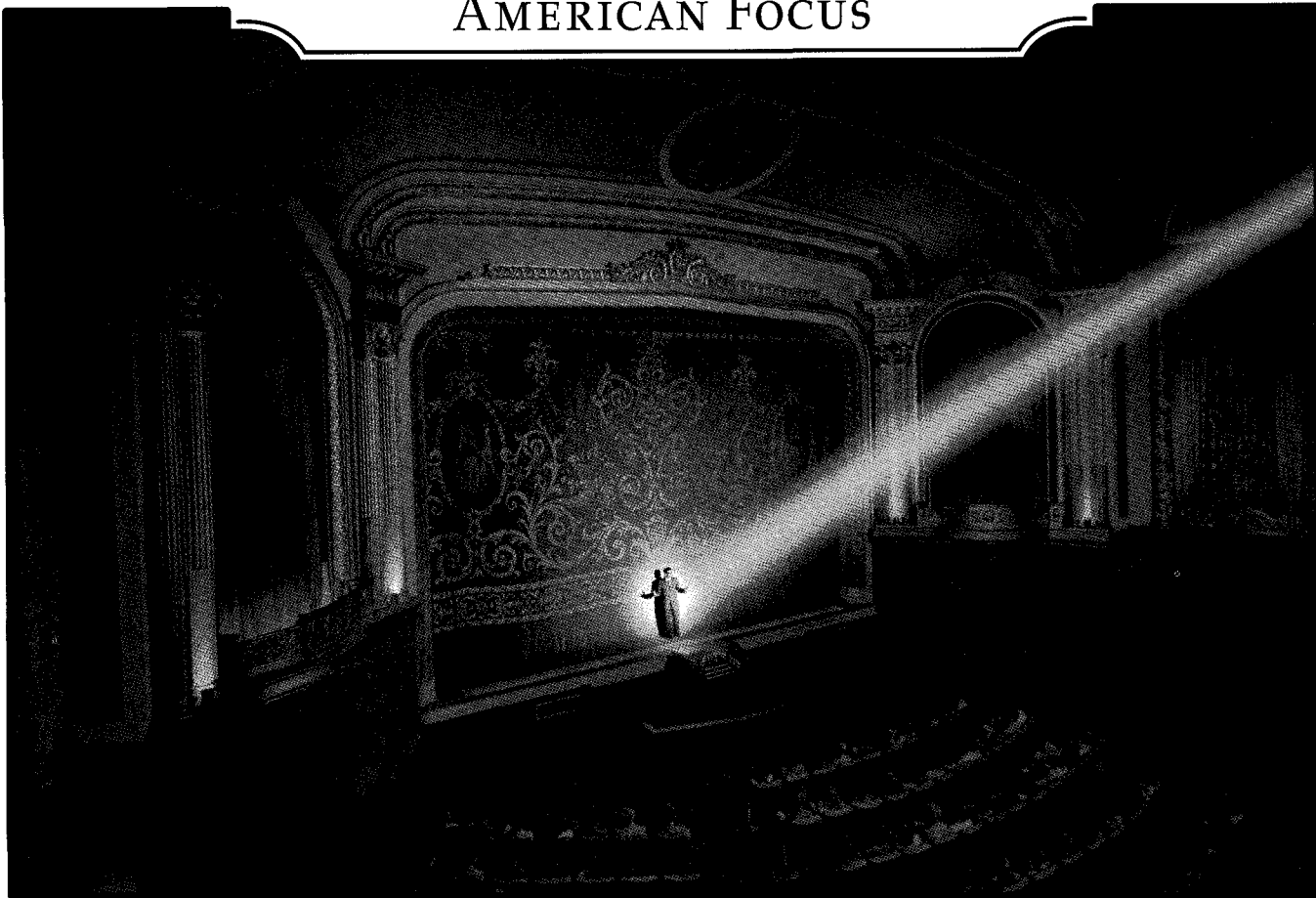
I remembered easily who he was—the loud, boisterous, fat, impish, man, who was something of a ring leader among the Nungs and who had endeared himself to everyone by his funny face. What was left was human and yet it wasn't—a person that had been only a few moments earlier and that now was a horrible mass of torn flesh and broken bones; bent and bloody, limbs contorted and distorted as they could never be alive. Most of his stomach was hollowed out and there was a huge hole that went through his mouth and nose and out the other side. I didn't really want to look and so I concentrated on working, avoiding contact with any personality.

They wrapped Bac She De up in a poncho, and one of the men started hiking down the path with the bundle of "parceled flesh on his shoulders." AK-47 fire suddenly erupted from their left. The men dove for cover into a gaping ditch next to a dike, and Kerry landed in water and mud nearly up to his waist, with the muzzle of his M-16 firmly planted in the swampy muck.

A whole line of mercenaries had already formed in the ditch, all shooting madly back at what seemed like nothing. However the whiz of bullets over our heads was clearly lethal. And Bac She De lay in front of us crumpled in the poncho while this holocaust went on. His feet were sticking out of one end and I couldn't take my eyes off the boots—one going one way and the other the opposite direction—and the whole thing just silhouetted where he had been dropped suddenly when the shooting began. The alive shooting over the dead to remain alive.

I was amazed at how detached I was from the whole scene. I just lay in the ditch, not firing because I wanted to save ammo and because I couldn't see what I was firing at and I thought about what was happening in New York at that very moment and if people really felt that I was doing something worthwhile while they went down to Schrafft's and had another ice cream sundae or while some fat little old man who made another million in the past months off defense contracts was charging another \$100 call girl to his expense account. And then, when the shooting stopped, I came back to where I was. ■

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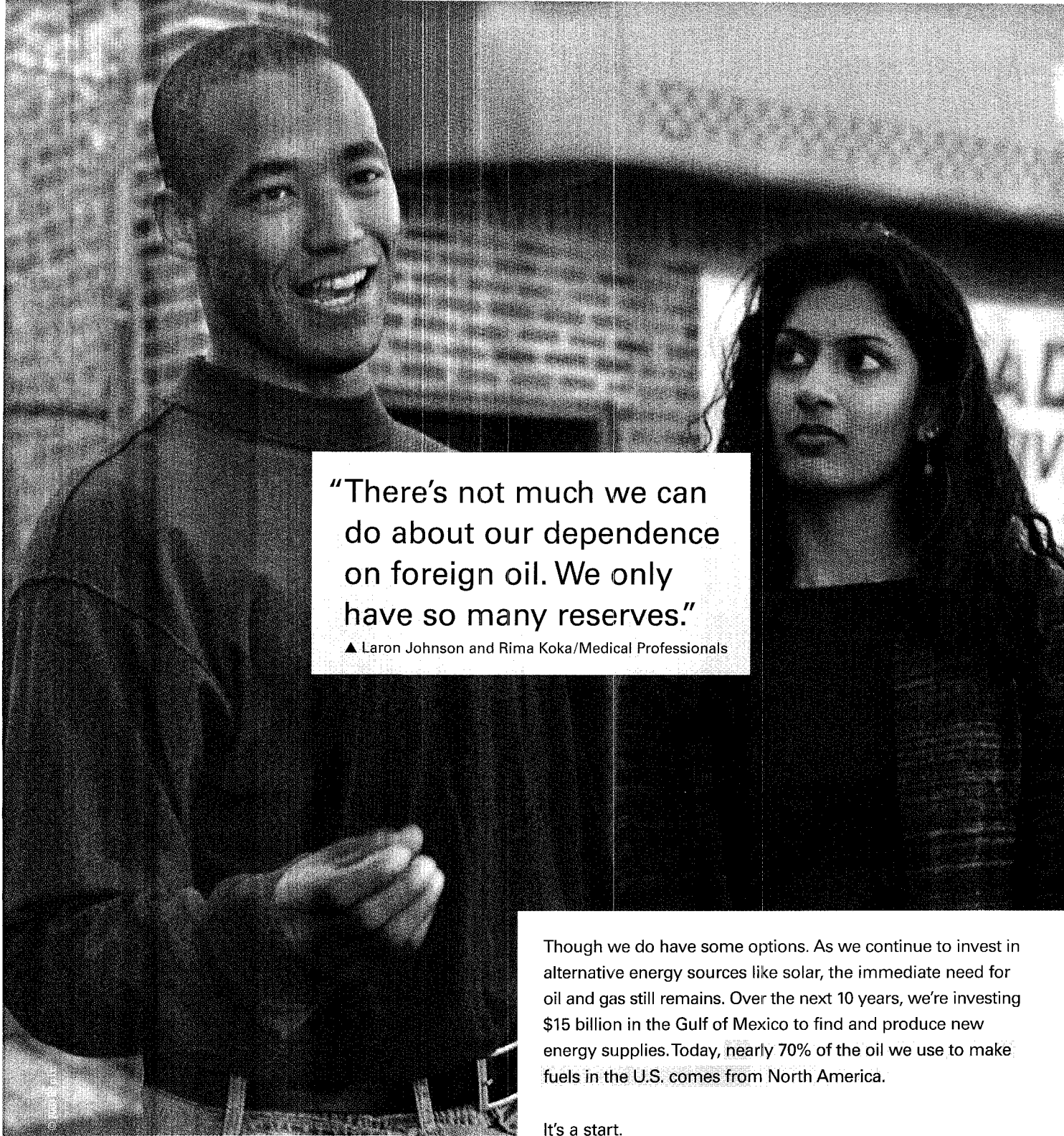


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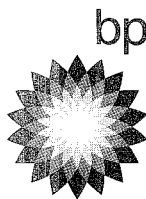


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# THE BUBBLE OF AMERICAN SUPREMACY

*A prominent financier argues that the heedless assertion of American power in the world resembles a financial bubble—and the moment of truth may be here*

BY GEORGE SOROS

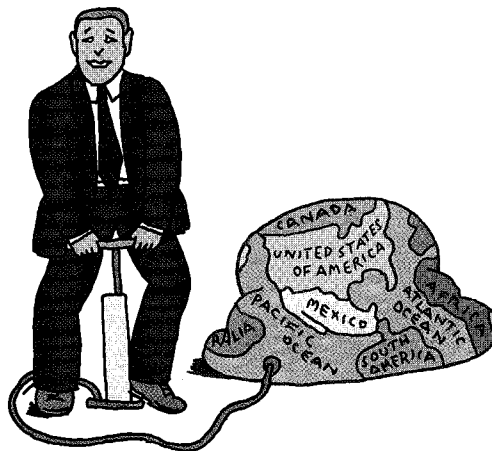
*Illustrations by Seymour Chwast*

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It is generally agreed that September 11, 2001, changed the course of history. But we must ask ourselves why that should be so. How could a single event, even one involving 3,000 civilian casualties, have such a far-reaching effect? The answer lies not so much in the event itself as in the way the United States, under the leadership of President George W. Bush, responded to it.

Admittedly, the terrorist attack was historic in its own right. Hijacking fully fueled airliners and using them as suicide bombs was an audacious idea, and its execution could not have been more spectacular. The destruction of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center made a symbolic statement that reverberated around the world, and the fact that people could watch the event on their television sets endowed it with an emotional impact that no terrorist act had ever achieved before. The aim of terrorism is to terrorize, and the attack of September 11 fully accomplished this objective.

Even so, September 11 could not have changed the course of history to the extent that it has if President Bush had not responded to it the way he did. He declared war on terrorism, and under that guise implemented a radical foreign-policy agenda whose underlying principles predated the tragedy. Those principles can be summed up as follows: International relations are relations of power, not law; power prevails and law legitimizes what prevails. The United States is unquestionably the dominant power in the post-Cold War world; it is therefore in a position to impose its views, interests, and values. The world would benefit from adopting those values, because the American model has demonstrated its superiority. The Clinton and first Bush Administrations failed to use the full



potential of American power. This must be corrected; the United States must find a way to assert its supremacy in the world.

This foreign policy is part of a comprehensive ideology customarily referred to as neoconservatism, though I prefer to describe it as a crude form of social Darwinism. I call it crude because it ignores the role of cooperation in the survival of the fittest, and puts all the emphasis on competition. In economic matters the competition is between

firms; in international relations it is between states. In economic matters social Darwinism takes the form of market fundamentalism; in international relations it is now leading to the pursuit of American supremacy.

Not all the members of the Bush Administration subscribe to this ideology, but neoconservatives form an influential group within it. They publicly called for the invasion of Iraq as early as 1998. Their ideas originated in the Cold War and were further elaborated in the post-Cold War era. Before September 11 the ideologues were hindered in implementing their strategy by two considerations: George W. Bush did not have a clear mandate (he became President by virtue of a single vote in the Supreme Court), and America did not have a clearly defined enemy that would have justified a dramatic increase in military spending.

September 11 removed both obstacles. President Bush declared war on terrorism, and the nation lined up behind its President. Then the Bush Administration proceeded to exploit the terrorist attack for its own purposes. It fostered the fear that has gripped the country in order to keep the nation united behind the President, and it used the war on terrorism to execute an agenda of American supremacy. That is how September 11 changed the course of history.

*George Soros is the chairman of Soros Fund Management and the founder of a network of philanthropic organizations active in more than fifty countries. This essay is drawn from his book of the same name, to be published in January by PublicAffairs.*



Exploiting an event to further an agenda is not in itself reprehensible. It is the task of the President to provide leadership, and it is only natural for politicians to exploit or manipulate events so as to promote their policies. The cause for concern lies in the policies that Bush is promoting, and in the way he is going about imposing them on the United States and the world. He is leading us in a very dangerous direction.

**T**he supremacist ideology of the Bush Administration stands in opposition to the principles of an open society, which recognize that people have different views and that nobody is in possession of the ultimate truth. The supremacist ideology postulates that just because we are stronger than others, we know better and have right on our side. The very first sentence of the September 2002 National Security Strategy (the President's annual laying out to Congress of the country's security objectives) reads, "The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise."

The assumptions behind this statement are false on two counts. First, there is no single sustainable model for national success. Second, the American model, which has in-

**September 11 introduced  
a discontinuity into  
American foreign policy.  
The abnormal, the radical,  
and the extreme have  
been redefined as  
normal. The advocates  
of continuity have been  
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action ever since.**

deed been successful, is not available to others, because our success depends greatly on our dominant position at the center of the global capitalist system, and we are not willing to yield it.

The Bush doctrine, first enunciated in a presidential speech at West Point in June of 2002, and incorporated into the National Security Strategy three months later, is built on two pillars: the United States will do everything in its power to maintain its unquestioned military supremacy; and the United States arrogates the right to pre-emptive action. In effect, the doctrine establishes two classes of sovereignty: the sovereignty of the United States, which

takes precedence over international treaties and obligations; and the sovereignty of all other states, which is subject to the will of the United States. This is reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

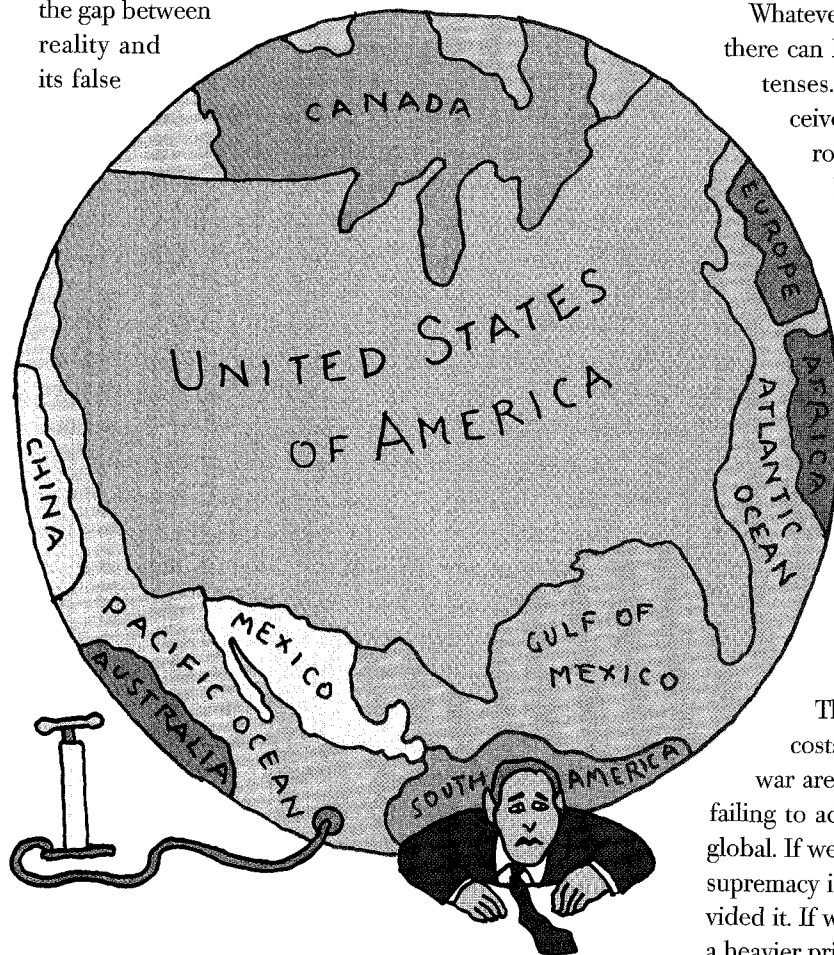
To be sure, the Bush doctrine is not stated so starkly; it is shrouded in doublespeak. The doublespeak is needed because of the contradiction between the Bush Administration's concept of freedom and democracy and the actual principles and requirements of freedom and democracy. Talk of spreading democracy looms large in the National Security Strategy. But when President Bush says, as he does frequently, that freedom will prevail, he means that America will prevail. In a free and open society, people are supposed to decide for themselves what they mean by freedom and democracy, and not simply follow America's lead. The contradiction is especially apparent in the case of Iraq, and the occupation of Iraq has brought the issue home. We came as liberators, bringing freedom and democracy, but that is not how we are perceived by a large part of the population.

It is ironic that the government of the most successful open society in the world should have fallen into the hands of people who ignore the first principles of open society. At home Attorney General John Ashcroft has used the war on terrorism to curtail civil liberties. Abroad the United States is trying to impose its views and interests through the use of military force. The invasion of Iraq was the first practical application of the Bush doctrine, and it has turned out to be counterproductive. A chasm has opened between America and the rest of the world.

The size of the chasm is impressive. On September 12, 2001, a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council invoked Article 5 of the NATO Treaty for the first time in the alliance's history, calling on all member states to treat the terrorist attack on the United States as an attack upon their own soil. The United Nations promptly endorsed punitive U.S. action against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. A little more than a year later the United States could not secure a UN resolution to endorse the invasion of Iraq. Gerhard Schröder won re-election in Germany by refusing to cooperate with the United States. In South Korea an underdog candidate was elected to the presidency because he was considered the least friendly to the United States; many South Koreans regard the United States as a greater danger to their security than North Korea. A large majority throughout the world opposed the war on Iraq.

**S**eptember 11 introduced a discontinuity into American foreign policy. Violations of American standards of behavior that would have been considered objectionable in ordinary times became accepted as appropriate to the circumstances. The abnormal, the radical, and the extreme have been redefined as normal. The advocates of continuity have been pursuing a rearguard action ever since.

To explain the significance of the transition, I should like to draw on my experience in the financial markets. Stock markets often give rise to a boom-bust process, or bubble. Bubbles do not grow out of thin air. They have a basis in reality—but reality as distorted by a misconception. Under normal conditions misconceptions are self-correcting, and the markets tend toward some kind of equilibrium. Occasionally, a misconception is reinforced by a trend prevailing in reality, and that is when a boom-bust process gets under way. Eventually the gap between reality and its false



interpretation becomes unsustainable, and the bubble bursts.

Exactly when the boom-bust process enters far-from-equilibrium territory can be established only in retrospect. During the self-reinforcing phase participants are under the spell of the prevailing bias. Events seem to confirm their beliefs, strengthening their misconceptions. This widens the gap and sets the stage for a moment of truth and an eventual reversal. When that reversal comes, it is liable to have devastating consequences. This course of events seems to have an inexorable quality, but a boom-bust process can be aborted at any stage, and the adverse effects can be reduced or avoided altogether. Few bubbles reach the extremes of the information-technology boom that ended in 2000. The sooner the process is aborted, the better.

The quest for American supremacy qualifies as a bubble.

The dominant position the United States occupies in the world is the element of reality that is being distorted. The proposition that the United States will be better off if it uses its position to impose its values and interests everywhere is the misconception. It is exactly by not abusing its power that America attained its current position.

Where are we in this boom-bust process? The deteriorating situation in Iraq is either the moment of truth or a test that, if it is successfully overcome, will only reinforce the trend.

Whatever the justification for removing Saddam Hussein, there can be no doubt that we invaded Iraq on false pretenses. Wittingly or unwittingly, President Bush deceived the American public and Congress and rode roughshod over the opinions of our allies. The gap between the Administration's expectations and the actual state of affairs could not be wider. It is difficult to think of a recent military operation that has gone so wrong. Our soldiers have been forced to do police duty in combat gear, and they continue to be killed. We have put at risk not only our soldiers' lives but the combat effectiveness of our armed forces. Their morale is impaired, and we are no longer in a position to properly project our power. Yet there are more places than ever before where we might have legitimate need to project that power. North Korea is openly building nuclear weapons, and Iran is clandestinely doing so. The Taliban is regrouping in Afghanistan. The costs of occupation and the prospect of permanent war are weighing heavily on our economy, and we are failing to address many festering problems—domestic and global. If we ever needed proof that the dream of American supremacy is misconceived, the occupation of Iraq has provided it. If we fail to heed the evidence, we will have to pay a heavier price in the future.

Meanwhile, largely as a result of our preoccupation with supremacy, something has gone fundamentally wrong with the war on terrorism. Indeed, war is a false metaphor in this context. Terrorists do pose a threat to our national and personal security, and we must protect ourselves. Many of the measures we have taken are necessary and proper. It can even be argued that not enough has been done to prevent future attacks. But the war being waged has little to do with ending terrorism or enhancing homeland security; on the contrary, it endangers our security by engendering a vicious circle of escalating violence.

The terrorist attack on the United States could have been treated as a crime against humanity rather than an act of war. Treating it as a crime would have been more appropriate. Crimes require police work, not military action. Protection



against terrorism requires precautionary measures, awareness, and intelligence gathering—all of which ultimately depend on the support of the populations among which the terrorists operate. Imagine for a moment that September 11 had been treated as a crime. We would not have invaded Iraq, and we would not have our military struggling to perform police work and getting shot at.

Declaring war on terrorism better suited the purposes of the Bush Administration, because it invoked military might; but this is the wrong way to deal with the problem. Military action requires an identifiable target, preferably a state. As a result the war on terrorism has been directed primarily against states harboring terrorists. Yet terrorists are by definition non-state actors, even if they are often sponsored by states.

The war on terrorism as pursued by the Bush Administration cannot be won. On the contrary, it may bring about a permanent state of war. Terrorists will never disappear. They will continue to provide a pretext for the pursuit of American supremacy. That pursuit, in turn, will continue to generate resistance. Further, by turning the hunt for terrorists into a war, we are bound to create innocent victims. The more innocent victims there are, the greater the resentment and the better the chances that some victims will turn into perpetrators.

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The terrorist threat must be seen in proper perspective. Terrorism is not new. It was an important factor in nineteenth-century Russia, and it had a great influence on the character of the czarist regime, enhancing the importance of secret police and justifying authoritarianism. More recently several European countries—Italy, Germany, Great Britain—had to contend with terrorist gangs, and it took those countries a decade or more to root them out. But those countries did not live under the spell of terrorism during all that time. Granted, using hijacked planes for suicide attacks is something new, and so is the prospect of terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. To come to terms with these threats will take some adjustment; but the threats cannot be allowed to dominate our existence. Exaggerating them will only make them worse. The most powerful country on earth cannot afford to be consumed by fear. To make the

war on terrorism the centerpiece of our national strategy is an abdication of our responsibility as the leading nation in the world. Moreover, by allowing terrorism to become our principal preoccupation, we are playing into the terrorists' hands. *They* are setting our priorities.

A recent Council on Foreign Relations publication sketches out three alternative national-security strategies. The first calls for the pursuit of American supremacy through the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive military action. It is advocated by neoconservatives. The second seeks the continuation of our earlier policy of deterrence and containment. It is advocated by Colin Powell and other moderates, who may be associated with either political party. The third would have the United States lead a cooperative effort to improve the world by engaging in preventive actions of a constructive character. It is not advocated by any group of significance, although President Bush pays lip service to it. That is the policy I stand for.

The evidence shows the first option to be extremely dangerous, and I believe that the second is no longer practical. The Bush Administration has done too much damage to our standing in the world to permit a return to the status quo. Moreover, the policies pursued before September 11 were clearly inadequate for dealing with the problems of globalization. Those problems require collective action. The United States is uniquely positioned to lead the effort. We cannot just do anything we want, as the Iraqi situation demonstrates, but nothing much can be done in the way of international cooperation without the leadership—or at least the participation—of the United States.

Globalization has rendered the world increasingly interdependent, but international politics is still based on the sovereignty of states. What goes on within individual states can be of vital interest to the rest of the world, but the principle of sovereignty militates against interfering in their internal affairs. How to deal with failed states and oppressive, corrupt, and inept regimes? How to get rid of the likes of Saddam? There are too many such regimes to wage war against every one. This is the great unresolved problem confronting us today.

I propose replacing the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive military action with preventive action of a constructive and affirmative nature. Increased foreign aid or better and fairer trade rules, for example, would not violate the sovereignty of the recipients. Military action should remain a last resort. The United States is currently preoccupied with issues of security, and rightly so. But the framework within which to think about security is *collective* security. Neither nuclear proliferation nor international terrorism can be successfully addressed without international cooperation. The world is looking to us for leadership. We have provided it in the past; the main reason why anti-American feelings are so strong in the world today is that we are not providing it in the present. ▀



# The 2003 National Book Award Finalists

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*The Voice at 3:00 A.M.: Selected Late and New Poems*, Charles Simic

*The Owner of the House: New Collected Poems 1940-2001*, Louis Simpson

*The Singing*, C.K. Williams

*Jelly Roll: A Blues*, Kevin Young

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S LITERATURE

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*The Canning Season*, Polly Horvath

*An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story  
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*The River Between Us*, Richard Peck

*Locomotion*, Jacqueline Woodson

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*The Big House: A Century in the Life  
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*Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, John D'Emilio

*Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy*, Carlos Eire

*The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness  
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*The Great Fire*, Shirley Hazzard

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# THE BACKSIDE OF WAR

*How I saved Iraq's modern art, and other confessions.  
A noncombatant's diary*

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

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Why is Iraq so easy to harm and so hard to help? After eight days of war U.S. troops were approaching Karbala, sixty miles from Baghdad. Misery had arrived everywhere. But humanitarian relief had gotten only as far as Safwan and Umm Qasr, just across the border from Kuwait.

I could see one reason that relief had gone no farther. I was outside Safwan on March 28, on the roof of a Kuwait Red Crescent tractor-trailer full of food donations. Below, a couple of hundred shoving, shouldering, kneeling, kicking Iraqi men and boys were grabbing at boxes of food.

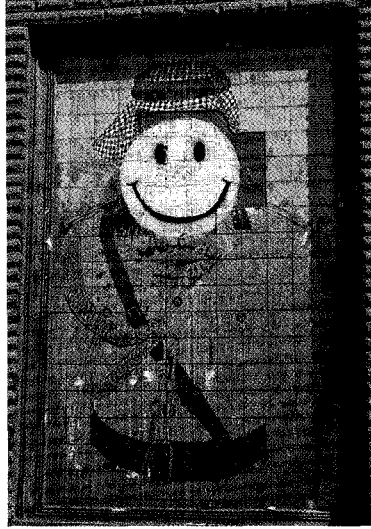
Red Crescent volunteers provided the boxes, gingerly, to the mob. Each white carton would be grasped by three or four or five belligerents and pulled in three or four or five directions—tug-of-Congolese-civil-war.

Every person in the mob seemed to be arguing with every other person. Giving in to impulses to push themselves forward and push others away, shouting Iraqis were propelled in circles. A short, plump, bald man sank in the roil. A small boy, red-faced and crying, was crushed between two bellowing fat men. An old man was trampled trying to join the fray.

The Iraqis were snatching the food as if they were starving, but they couldn't have been starving or they wouldn't have been able to snatch so well. Most looked fully fed. Some were *too* fit and active. Everyone behind the trailer was expending a lot of calories at noon on a 90° day.

Looking out, I saw irrigated patches in the desert, at about the same density as the patches on the uniform of a mildly diligent Boy Scout. The tomatoes were ripe. Nannies, billies, and kids browsed between garden plots. Goat bolognese was on offer, at least for some locals.

There was no reason for people to clobber one another. Even assuming that each man in the riot—and each boy—was the head of a family, and assuming the family was huge, there was enough food in the truck. Mohammed al-Kandari, a doctor



*Baghdad, 2003*

from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, had explained this to the Iraqis when the trailer arrived. Al-Kandari was a forceful explainer. He resembled a beneficent version of Bluto in the Popeye comics, or Bluto in *Animal House*.

Al-Kandari had persuaded the Iraqis to form ranks. They looked patient and grateful, the way we privately imagine the recipients of food donations looking when we're writing checks to charities. Then the trailer was opened, and everything went to hell.

Al-Kandari marched through the donnybrook and slammed the trailer doors shut. He harangued the Iraqis. They lined up again. The trailer was

opened, and everything went to hell.

Al-Kandari waded in and closed the trailer doors again. He swung his large arms in parallel arcs at the Iraqis. "Line up!" he boomed; "Queue!" he thundered—the Arabic-speaking doctor speaking to Arabic-speakers in English, as if no Arabic word existed for the action.

Al-Kandari took a pad of Post-it notes and a marker pen from his lab-coat pocket. "Numbers!" he said, still speaking English. "I will give you all numbers!" A couple of hundred shouldering, shoving Iraqi men and boys grabbed at the Post-it notes.

The doctor gave up and opened the trailer doors. I climbed the ladder behind the truck cab to get a better view.

Aid-seekers in England would queue automatically by needs, disabled war vets and nursing mothers first. Americans would bring lawn chairs and sleeping bags, camp out the night before, and sell their places to the highest bidders. Japanese would text-message one another, creating virtual formations, getting in line to get in line. Germans would await commands from a local official, such as the undersupervisor of the town clock. Even Italians know how to line up, albeit in an ebullient wedge. The happier parts of

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the world have capacities for self-organization so fundamental and obvious that they appear to be the pillars of civilization. But here—on the road to Ur, in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, where civilization has obtained for 5,000 years longer than it has, for example, at a Libertarian Party confab in Phoenix—nothing was supporting the roof.

What I saw, however, wasn't anarchy. British soldiers stood nearby, emirs of everything within rifle shot. The Iraqis did not use weapons or even fists in the aid scramble. Later a British soldier said, "We try to stay out of crowd control, because it looks like we're trying to stop the aid distribution. But we can't let them start fighting." They did start fighting. A few Iraqis hit each other with sticks. They fought, however, at the front end of the truck. British soldiers broke up the fight.

The Iraqis didn't try to climb into the tractor-trailer or break through its side doors. Red Crescent volunteers, coming and going from the back of the truck, were unmolested. Once an aid box was fully in an Iraqi's control and had been pulled free from the commotion, no one tried to take it. I saw four boxes being guarded by a young boy.

I watched a confident gray-haired man push toward the trailer gate. He had wire-rimmed glasses on the end of his nose and a cigarette in the corner of his mouth. He dove for a box, his glasses flying, cigarette embers burning various *gutras* and *dishdashahs*. He disappeared for the better part of a minute. Then he came out on the other side of the throng, box under one arm and glasses somehow back on his face (but minus the cigarette). The gray-haired man looked around and delivered an open-handed whack to someone who, I guess, had indulged in a late hit.

I stared at the rampage for an hour. Now and then I'd be noticed on the trailer roof. Whenever I caught someone's eye, I was greeted with a big, happy smile. The Iraqis were having fun.

Worse fun was to follow. We were out in the countryside because the first aid convoy to Safwan, two days before, had gone into the center of town and had been looted in a less orderly riot. I left the truck roof and interviewed al-Kandari, or tried to. The doctor was still being importuned for worthless numbers on Post-it notes. "We almost get organized," he overstated, "but then some gangs will come from downtown, by running or by truck." They were arriving already, in anything they could get to move—taxis, pickups, ancient Toyota Land Cruisers, bicycles, Russian Belarus tractors, a forklift, a dump truck.

The men from town promptly climbed into the Red Crescent truck. They threw boxes to their buddies. The volunteers fled. In a few minutes one squad of looters had seventeen aid boxes. The box throwers were dancing and singing in the back of the tractor-trailer. A reporter who'd covered the previous convoy said, "I saw these same guys." He pointed to a wolfish-looking fellow who was pulling the tail of his *gutra* across his face. "You can tell the really bad ones," the reporter said. "They have shoes."

Al-Kandari ordered the driver to start the truck. The British troops cleared the highway. The truck drove back to Safwan with the trailer doors open and looters still inside. The other looters, in their miscellany of rides, gave chase.



Men stood on car hoods and in pickup beds, trying to catch boxes being thrown from inside the trailer. Boxes fell, spraying fruit, rice, and powdered milk across the pavement. A flatbed truck passed us, piled with scores of aid boxes. The men standing on the bumpers had shoes. Horn-honking, chanting, and other noises of celebration could be heard in the distance.

We drove through Safwan. Boys ran alongside our convoy, managing, with deft coordination of purposes, to jeer and beg at the same time. A reporter tossed a bottle of water to a boy. The boy picked it up and threw it at the reporter.

Safwan's houses, placed higgledy-piggledy, were built of tumbling-down mud brick. The other buildings were squat and lumpish, their walls formed of concrete with too much aggregate in the mix—Baath Party adobe. Signs of economic activity were nil. In the one park, playground

IAN WALDIE/GETTY IMAGES

equipment was rusty and broken. Trash was everywhere. Hundreds of black plastic shopping sacks blew along the streets, snagging in the rest of the rubbish. The people of Iraq may have nothing, but they have the bag it came in.

Safwan was a dump, but not a ruin. There was little war damage. Coalition forces had destroyed almost nothing but the customs sheds, which hadn't been used since 1991, when the Gulf War cease-fire was signed—as it happened, at Safwan.

In an hour and a half we were back in Kuwait City—in the same geography, on the same oil reserves, with the same people, same language, same religion. But Kuwait City is Houston without Enron (and, unfortunately, beer).

**T**welve years ago Kuwait City was a dump *and* a ruin. The Iraqis destroyed what they couldn't steal and left the rubble full of their garbage, including piles of human feces. The hotel where the Gulf War press stayed survived only because it had carpets made from some self-extinguishing synthetic fiber. The Iraqis kept pouring diesel oil on the carpets. The flames kept going out. The hotel stank. There was no electricity. The rooftop cisterns ran dry. The only food was eggs, cooked by the hotel staff over campfires in the parking lot.

**A reporter who'd covered the previous aid convoy said, "I saw these same guys." He pointed to a wolfish-looking fellow. "You can tell the really bad ones. They have shoes."**

Twelve years later in Kuwait City I had tea and smoked-salmon sandwiches and tarts and cakes and sticky treats with an American lawyer who has lived in Kuwait for twenty years. He was trapped by the 1990 invasion and forced to hide. He described the convoy of empty trucks that came from Baghdad every day—"all kinds of trucks, dump trucks included"—and returned every night full of swag. He told about the Baghdad buses that were driven to Kuwait carrying members of the "People's Army"—men and women turned loose in the shopping districts to pull down gates, push in doors, and loot. "The Iraqis," he said, "pried up the reflectors between the lanes in the streets and took them back to Baghdad." Then the lawyer spread his hands to take in the magnificence of the restaurant where we were sitting. "Even after all that," he said, "there was a lot left in Kuwait."

The smelly Gulf War hotel and everything else I remembered had been rebuilt or replaced. Freedom accomplishes extraordinary things. And there is an extraordinary list of things that Kuwait is free of. Kuwait is free of the Wahhabi religious idealism that inspires neighboring Saudi Arabia. There is an evangelical church in Kuwait City, a Coptic church, and a Roman Catholic Holy Family cathedral complex with crosses forty feet high on its gable ends. (I confess to thinking that one way to get a drink in Kuwait was to

take communion. But a priest from India drank all the wine.)

Kuwait is free of the lofty goals of pan-Arab socialism that animate the Baath Party. Kuwait is also free of the lofty goals that animate other political parties. Political parties are illegal. To vote in Kuwait one must basically be a son of a family that lived there when oil was something that seeped from the ground and ruined the camel forage. The franchise is denied to women and to most naturalized citizens and to the 62.9 percent of Kuwait's population—mostly guest workers and their dependents—who aren't citizens at all. The national assembly is of dubious political power anyway. Kuwait is more majority-owned than majority-ruled. The relatives of Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah have held title since the eighteenth century.

As a nation, Kuwait has been, arguably, free of freedom itself. Claimed in turn by Constantinople, Riyadh, and Baghdad, Kuwait has survived by playing Turks off Persians, Arabs off one another, and the English off everyone. Kuwait became a British protectorate in 1899. In 1961 the British were asked to leave and then immediately asked to return, to forestall an invasion by a previous Iraqi strongman, Abd al-Karim Qasim.

Now, some would say, Kuwait is an American fief. The Kuwaitis are free of resentment about that. Being an American

in Kuwait City was like being a minor celebrity come back home to live. Walking through the souks, I was greeted with shy smiles and hellos from fellow shoppers. Merchants invited me to have coffee *after* I'd bought something. In the luggage souk two shopkeepers left their stores and showed me around until I'd bought what I wanted from a rival. A teller at the bank told me he liked my haircut. As the war neared, hotels and shopping centers put metal detectors inside their doors. When I was going into the Salhiya Mall, a security guard saw me start to empty the many pockets of my safari jacket. He got up, helped me out of the coat, carried it around the detector stanchions unsearched, and helped me put it back on.

The essential freedom that Kuwaitis have is the freedom to do what they want. What they want to do is shop, eat, and sit around. The Kuwaitis are among the few peoples on earth—teenagers aside—who don't sneer at these freedoms. Apparently, they never did. Kuwait's Popular Traditional Museum is devoted to recapturing "Old Kuwait"—"old" being before 1951, when bountiful oil revenues arrived. In the museum's corridors are life-size models of bazaars, food markets, coffeehouses, kitchens, and home interiors, all filled with mannequins in period dress, sitting around. Exhibited artifacts include early electric fans, gramophones, Brownie cameras, radios with vacuum tubes, and a set of



china commemorating the 1937 coronation of George VI.

In the new Kuwait this freedom of ways and means benefits from means that are prodigious. The McDonald's on Arabian Gulf Street has a doorman and a maitre d'. A Mercedes dealership on the west side of town is the size of a county fair. Premium gasoline costs eighty-seven cents a gallon—or, to put that in Kuwaiti currency (at \$3.34 to the dinar), nothing. Lunch lasts from noon to five. The *gutrah* on the man in line ahead of me at the McDonald's bore the Dunhill label.

Souk Sharq, on Kuwait Bay near the sheik's palace, might have been designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, if Wright had been alive in 2000 and in need of a quick job to knock off. The souk has its own yacht harbor. Inside the marketplace is a wide central aisle, space that in an American shopping center would be given over to booths selling sunglasses and caps with sports-team logos. At Souk Sharq one aisle stall was occupied by the De Beers diamond company. The souk's grocery store, the Sultan Center, was Balducci's as Costco. Caviar tins were piled to the ceiling. In the food court the Chinese counter had Peking duck to go.

I interviewed a Bedouin the next day. He was tending his camel herd in the desert west of the city. He wore sandals and a sail-sized *dishdashah*. His *gutrah* (not from Dunhill) was tucked in manifold gatherings under the *agal*, or headband. On the back of the Bedouin's riding camel was a carved-wood and tooled-leather footstool of a saddle. The camel's flanks were covered by vividly woven and elaborately tasseled wool provision bags. This was the first time I'd ever seen anyone really use the kind of handicrafts that tourists bring home. The Bedouin milked a mother camel and offered me the bowl. We sat around. He said, "I have three sons in medical school in the United States."

The camel's milk was frothy, light, slightly sweet. It would make an excellent latte. The desert sky was crosshatched with power lines. Pumping stations and tank farms could be seen in the distance. There was a six-lane highway behind the desert patriarch. He was Lawrence of New Jersey.

The liberties of Kuwait may be quotidian, but Kuwaitis are serious about them. Even in New Jersey the right to drive isn't exercised with Kuwaiti vigor. I was on that six-lane highway going 70 miles an hour in the left-hand lane, in bumper-to-bumper traffic, when a Mercedes 500SE sedan blinked its lights behind me. I had nowhere to go. The Mercedes driver cut left onto the unpaved shoulder and proceeded at 90 or 100 down the barely car-width slot between the traffic and the concrete barrier. I could see his taillights wobble. He was terraplaning, gravel-surfing, leaving a mile of stone stars in the windshields of the cars ahead.

The small, ordinary freedoms of life are priceless, especially if you remember to have someone else pay the price. Billboards on the backs of Kuwait's city buses show a photograph of a Kuwaiti hugging an American soldier during the 1991 liberation with the caption, in English and Arabic, "We Never Forget."

In early March of 2003 most American soldiers were too far from town to be hugged. Also, they were about to liberate in the other direction. I wonder whether the Iraqis will say "We never forget." If so, in what tone of voice will they say it?

At Camp Virginia, in northern Kuwait, amenities were few. There were long lines for the hot meals and cold showers. A sergeant took me for a ride in his Bradley fighting vehicle. We went across the desert at terrific speed—"terrific" being about 45 mph. But in a large armored, tracked vehicle this is like 45 mph down the stairs on a cafeteria tray. As we crested a berm, the sergeant said, "Sometimes I don't know why they pay me!" He'd been in Kuwait for six months. Camp Virginia came back into view. "And sometimes," the sergeant said, "they couldn't pay me enough."

His crew wanted to know about *my* pay. "How much do you get paid to come here?" they asked. "Is this fun for you?" An officer from Army Public Affairs shushed them.

I was shown a mobile command-post tent carried by five trucks and big enough for a circus that has given up aerial acts. But inside it seemed to be a Wall Street bond-trading boiler room. Officers sat at rows of tables, staring at computer terminals. In front of the tables were PowerPoint presentations on three large screens. Map displays showed enemy and coalition military positions in the planned initial combat zone, in Iraq, and in the whole Middle East.

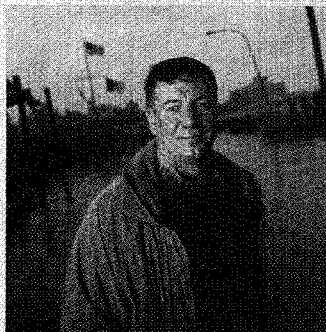
The tent was windowless, the better to protect against NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) threats. The other tents were also windowless. Ordinary soldiers, along with headquarters staff, spend a lot of on-duty time staring at computer terminals. And they spend a lot of time inside NBC suits, behind gas-mask lenses, breathing through filters. In the back of the Bradley fighting vehicle, where six combat infantrymen sit, the only peek at the outside is through periscopic slits. There's something as indoorsy as eBay about the modern military. And from all I know about either part of that simile, something as historically transformative.

The military is indoorsy but not homey. The numerous ducts, tubes, and wiring bundles of modernity—covered by Sheetrock and acoustic tile in civilian life—are left bare in the Army. The hardware seems to expand with exposure. Austere functionality has so overgrown the interior of the Humvee that only four soldiers can fit into that hulking vehicle. Perhaps technology is squeezing human beings out of warfare. But will they want to go?

A Chinook helicopter crew took me along on a live-fire exercise, to practice with the door-mounted M-60 machine gun. We flew to a range on the northern border where Iraqi military junk from the Gulf War had been hauled. One of every so many rounds in the M-60's ammunition belt was a tracer, which left a Fourth of July rocket trail telling where the bullets were going. I asked if it was like shooting a rifle, aiming precisely, or like shooting a shotgun, leading the target. "It's better than either," the gunnery officer said.

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"It's like walking the dog!" Bullets ambled along toward a Soviet-era Iraqi tank—trot, trot, trot, and mess in the yard.

Flying back from the firing range, I had a moment of clarity about one of the supposed underlying causes of the conflict in Iraq. The Kuwaiti desert is as flat as a patio and as big as Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. The entire space appeared to be covered with tanks, artillery pieces, Bradley fighting vehicles, Humvees, transport trucks, and Patriot missile batteries. Streaks of asphalt runway ran in all directions. The tarmac held fighter planes, cargo planes, and hundreds more helicopters: Chinooks, Black Hawks, Apaches, Kiowas. Amid the materiel were Camp Virginia, Camp New York, Camp Pennsylvania, and—from how it looked to me—Camps Other Forty-seven and Camp Puerto Rico and Camp Guam. Military force extended from me to the horizon, 360 degrees of war. It is much cheaper to buy oil than to steal it.

**A**t dawn on Thursday, March 20, when the first American missiles struck Baghdad, I was asleep in a big soft bed. My wife, watching late-night news in the United States, called me in Kuwait to tell me that the war had started. That was embarrassing for a professional journalist in a combat zone. Although we *were* fighting for freedom—in

warning had any effect on the Kuwaitis. When the sirens started, I saw a man in a *dishdashah* come out of an office building and rush nervously toward his car. Fifteen feet from the vehicle he stopped and pressed the door-lock button on his key-chain remote, and then went back into the office building.

There was a mannequin wearing a gas mask in a store's window display, but it turned out that the store sold equipment to the police and the military. Plastic sheeting and duct tape were displayed in the hardware souk. "Many sales," said a fellow at one of the stalls. "But not because of the war—because of good price."

One of the Kuwaiti soldiers guarding my hotel wanted America to pick up the pace. "Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow," he exhorted, and made the motion of a baseball umpire calling a runner safe. "Boom!" he urged.

A tiny old lady wrapped in a black *abayah* approached me in the vegetable souk. She had the face of Mother Teresa—or, rather, the face that Mother Teresa deserved but didn't get. "American?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

She gave me a beatific grin, a smile of hope and blessing, and drew her finger across her throat. "*Saddam!*" she said, beaming.

## The night I returned from Safwan, a missile hit Souk Sharq. The Kuwaitis claimed it was a "Seersucker" missile. Who names these things—leftover old preppies at the CIA?

this case the freedom to go back to sleep in a big soft bed.

I got out of bed, eventually, and went to interview the random bystanders who have become central to news coverage in the modern era. About a third of the stores and businesses in Kuwait City were closed. A bomb-sniffing police dog was digging furiously in a concrete planter outside my hotel, which would have been alarming if the dog hadn't had the unmistakable air of a pooch who smells something deliciously dead.

The Kuwaitis I talked to were confident and enthusiastic. The proprietor of a fabric shop said, "America is here. I feel no problem in Kuwait."

I went to buy additional pens and notebooks, in case other spokesmen for the Arab street were more forthcoming. I asked the stationery-store owner about the onset of hostilities. "This is good," he said. "This is better. I want Saddam finish." He told me about seeing a young Filipina raped by Iraqi troops in 1990, outside his shop door. "I could do nothing," he said. "They loot my store—everything." He put a finger to his temple. "Click," he said. He all but came over the counter with angry enthusiasm. He declared, "I go for a soldier!" Then he sighed. "But my son says, 'You are sixty-seven.'" His Indian shop assistant steered me away from the less expensive pens.

Iraq began firing missiles at Kuwait. Only the first air-raid

There was no sign of fear or patience among the Kuwaitis, any more than there had been among the Iraqis at Safwan. Sermons could be preached about the civilizing benefits and progressive influences of fear and patience.

And I've preached all of them to my three- and five-year-old daughters. I suspect I have one or two elements of the Muslim world in my own home.

But only one or two. An article in *Kuwait This Month* featured the *miswak*, a twig from the saltbush tree that is employed as a natural toothbrush. "Muslims use it," the article said, "on the recommendations of Prophet Muhammed."

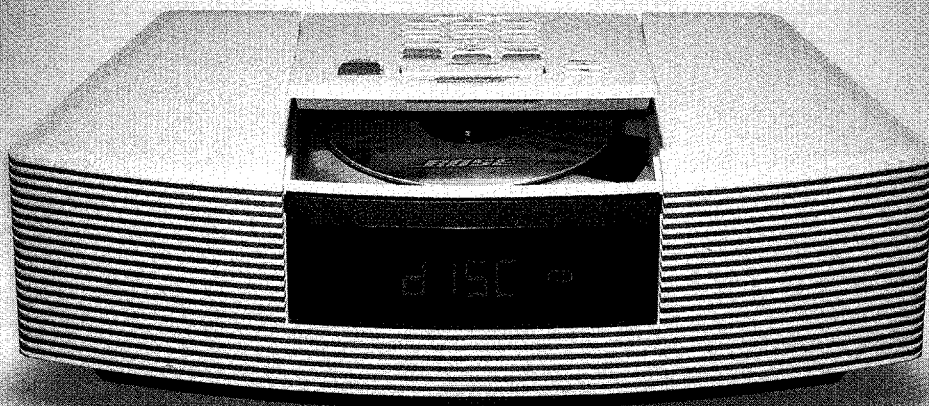
The Prophet is quoted in the text: "Use the miswak, for verily, it purifies the mouth, and it is a pleasure for the Lord." Not only is there no separation of Church and State in the Muslim world, there is no separation of Church and dental hygiene.

The night I returned from Safwan, a missile hit Souk Sharq. The Kuwaitis claimed it was a "Seersucker" missile. Who names these things—leftover old preppies at the CIA? Next the Madras Cummerbund missile and the Lime Green Pants With Little Trout Flies missile. I went to Souk Sharq in the morning. Kuwaiti police officers were lifting the crime-scene tape so that all the other fellows could have a look at the cool destruction.



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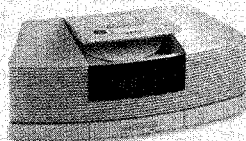
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The damage wasn't great. But in one perfume shop every bottle had been exploded by the warhead's shock wave. The place reeked of Shalimar. A mature, adult American with a perfume store would have been on his cell phone screaming at his insurance agent. The Kuwaiti storeowner was sitting in a chair sipping a little cup of coffee. I introduced myself. The owner pointed cheerfully to the wet pile of broken glass. "Special price!" he said.

Being a "unilateral" reporter in Kuwait, rather than a reporter "embedded" with the military, meant that I watched the war on TV. Except I was too close for comfort—to TV, not war. Cable and broadcast networks had taken over swaths of Kuwait's hotels. I was walking down the hall in the Sheraton and saw a huddle of serious-faced ABC television producers. They were having an animated discussion. Something was up. I moved closer.

"Do you think we should wake Diane?"

"I don't want to wake Diane."

"Maybe we shouldn't wake Diane."

I started to keep a notebook of things said by people sitting behind desks on television:

*CNN, 3/19, Larry King to John Major:* "I don't think the United States has ever started a war."

*CNN, 3/20, several hours after the "decapitation strike" against Saddam Hussein:* "It is like a brief intermission in some terrible, but real, movie."

*CNN, 3/23, concerning a 101st Airborne soldier who threw a grenade into an officer's tent:* "We'd like to point out that the soldier is said to have an Arab- or Muslim-sounding last name, but we'd like to point out that at this time this doesn't mean anything at all"

But I gave it up. I'm not prejudiced against CNN. It was just the first station on my hotel-room channel changer.

Baghdad fell. Iraqi rioting commenced. Looting was undertaken in earnest. Twenty-four-hour television coverage turned into the Shopping Channel. The war was over—not the killing, dying part but the part in which I was involved. I could tell by a sign on the bulletin board at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information press center: "For Sale—Helmet, U.S. Army medium, like new, \$100. Flak Vest, concealable, worn once, \$350."

Newscasters began mentioning the Laci Peterson murder case. Some attributed the lapsing scrutiny of the war to the short attention span of the American public. But many Americans have given their all—indeed, could be said to have sacrificed their lives—doing their best for people who now hate them. A nation that has teens in the house can't be expected to focus on Iraq forever.

On April 16 I hitched a ride on an Air Force C-17 cargo plane to the Baghdad airport. Bouncing around in the windowless cargo hold was an Oshkosh fire engine.

"A fire engine?" said the Army Public Affairs officer who

took charge of me in Baghdad, and whom I'll call Major Bob. "We've already got a fire engine. What we need is water to put in it."

Thousands of troops occupied the airport. Their water was in one-liter plastic bottles. Sometimes there was a little water left over from drinking. Then a shower could be had by poking holes in the bottom of the water bottle, holding it right-side up, and unscrewing the cap.

Hot meals were unavailable. "Meals Ready to Eat" are less of a death penalty to the digestive system than they were during the Gulf War, and more of a life sentence to the school lunchroom. The weather was hot and windy in the daytime and hot and windy at night.

Troops and supplies were being flown to the airport's cargo facilities. The passenger terminal, designed by French architects in a "Harrah's Arabia" style, was being used as a bivouac. The combination of no planes at the gates, dull food, nonfunctioning air-conditioning, and snoring people stretched on uncomfortable boarding-lounge furniture made for a shock of the familiar to a frequent flyer. Except you could smoke. Except everyone was running out of cigarettes.

There was an ad on the airport wall for the place where Iraq's Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, used to regale the international press: "Al Rashid—It's More Than a Hotel."

"It's a target," an Army captain said.

I camped in the airport's administration building, in an office with bookshelves full of Reagan-era Boeing manuals and out-of-date Jeppesen guides to takeoff and landing patterns at international airports. I did not find one for La Guardia with the World Trade Center towers circled in red. What I found instead was culture, or evidence of it.

Looting by Americans was strictly forbidden. But scrounging was okay, and we didn't have coffee cups. The Iraqi airport administrators had a wall of personal lockers, all carefully locked but with doors subject to persuasion with a Leatherman tool. I found a cup in one locker and—along with a bag of loose tea, a sliver of soap, and a spare pair of socks—the crudely printed cover of an English-language Iraqi edition of *Waiting for Godot*.

Artistic genius, arguably including Samuel Beckett's, has limned the extraordinary experiences of war—terror, desperation, suffering, bravery. Banal discomforts, however, need less brilliant insights to convey them. For example, "sandstorm." The word is too beach, too playground. And Iraq doesn't have sand. It has fine-ground goat droppings and minute particles of gluey clay. When the wind whips up, it's small-craft warnings in the lizard terrarium, a horizontal dirt blizzard. Then the drizzle that comes with spring sandstorms in the Persian Gulf begins, and with every breath the soldiers are fed a slime pie. Months of that and the food and the water, plus those extraordinary experiences of war, such as getting shot at, are wearing.





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The lavatory facilities at the airport administration building consisted of one plastic stacking conference-room chair with a hole cut out of the seat. It was placed over a bucket behind the TO BAGHDAD sign on the departure ramp.

Not far from the airport was a palace called, I think, Abu Ghraib, but Iraq's presidential palaces are marked with barbed wire and watchtowers, not park-service signs or historical plaques. The palace was built on an artificial island in a fishpond big enough for water-skiing. There was a swamped speedboat in the shallows. Some soldiers had removed whip antennas from Humvees and rigged the antennas with communication wire and safety pins. A fish fry was planned.

The palace architecture hinted that Iraq had a heritage. There was a dome and a bunch of pointy arches and some elaborate scribbles in Arabic around the front door, which was three stories high. Scale, proportion, and ornamental detail were those of the Ritz-Carlton Tomb of Hammurabi or the Great Mosque in Disney World's Muslimland.

The palace was badly built. Shoddy rubble-wall construction was skimmed with a thin layer of concrete. Lines were scored in the concrete, faking the seams of quarried stone. A missile had blown off the back of the palace, exposing its crawl spaces and utility rooms. The PVC plumbing and low-grade electrical wiring looked like things strewn around by a trailer-park tornado.

Inside, materials were marble, alabaster, mahogany, teak, and mother-of-pearl, elaborately handcrafted by badly skilled workmen. The main reception room was four floors high. A crystal chandelier hung down past two tiers of balconies. I paced off the shadow it cast on the floor. The chandelier was the size of a two-car garage. If a reason to invade Iraq was wanted, felony interior decorating would have done. Imagine Liberace as an inner-city high school basketball star who'd just signed an NBA contract and converted to Islam.

Major Bob and I saw civilians being searched at one of the checkpoints. A village that housed Iraqi airport workers was inside the airport security perimeter. Some of the villagers had fled during the war. Now they were coming back. But they had to be frisked first.

For propriety's sake, the women were asked to frisk themselves. They patted their chadors, or their jeans and T-shirts, with both hands from ankles to shoulders, maintaining a neutrality of expression that is admirable in a forced macarena.

Najah Raheem, age fifty-one, had been hired by the Army to interpret at the checkpoint for \$3.00 a day.

"What did you do before the war?" Major Bob asked him.

"I was an air-traffic controller."

"I'm probably living in your office," Major Bob said.

Najah suggested that we go to the village, called "the French Quarter" because it was built for the airport's French construction crews. "They will be eager to talk to you in the French Quarter," Najah said.

"They" was a formidable woman in black who had several of what seemed to be the village elders meekly in tow and any number of small boys and girls peering from behind her



cloaks. "Three hundred families!" she said. "Many big families. Smallest families have five children. Ten days—no water, no electricity, no food, no cars."

One of the elders was brought forward to say, "The water main is broken" and "There are no wells."

"Is *this* the new Iraq?" the formidable woman said. "No schools. All night it is dark. We need *one* generator. There is no money. No doctor." She pointed to an old man. He had sores on his feet. He displayed them. "No insulin," the woman said.

Major Bob wanted to know if there had been any looting or threats of violence in the village. "Are you safe?" he asked.

"Safe?" she replied. "Too safe! Ignore safe!"

Major Bob went to the Army Engineers. "We've got a little hearts-and-minds situation in our own back yard," he said. The officer on duty looked harried. The engineers knew about the problems in the French Quarter, but the French



Quarter was hooked into the airport, and they hadn't been able to get the airport's main power and water systems working. Anyway, orders would have to come from above.

"Which means a written report," Major Bob said, eyeing me. Major Bob is an infantry officer by training and inclination. But the Army thinks about its field officers what Harvard M.B.A.s think about themselves: They can run anything. "I get to rotate out of Public Affairs next year," Major Bob said.

The most tendentious journalists don't write to accomplish much except getting read. The most meticulous fact-checking departments don't check actual knowledge. It's remarkable how much about pipelines and electrical grids one reporter can be ignorant of. The report was delivered, and it joined, electronically, a queue of complaints, demands, and emergency appeals.

I went into Baghdad, tagging along on military errands. The city looked more like the target of a trash collectors' strike than the target of shock and awe. There were burned-out military vehicles here and there, but garbage was everywhere. The destruction from the air attacks

long line at a gas station, who hid his AK-47 under his *dish-dashah* as we drove by. The sound of AK-47s being fired could be heard, at a distance, wherever American troops happened to be. Some of the shooting was rhythmic, celebratory "happy fire." Some was not, and came in single shots or short, discordant bursts. The gunfire increased after sundown.

If Kuwait City is Houston without Enron, Baghdad is Washington, D.C., without Pierre L'Enfant. Wide boulevards have been plopped down anyplace amid an absurdity of monuments and monumental buildings and monumentally bad taste. A photograph of the soccer stadium could convince tabloid readers of an alien invasion. To commemorate victory (of which there was none) in the Iran-Iraq War, Baghdad's parade ground has a pair of boxcar-size hands popping out of the ground, holding crossed swords in a metal arch seventy feet high. And there's an identical arch at the parade ground's other end, to commemorate victory some more. The arches were untouched by the recent conflict. They form a moving testimony to the discipline, training, and self-restraint of the U.S. Army's tank gunners.

A U.S. armored battalion had occupied another Bagh-

## If a reason to invade Iraq was wanted, felony interior decorating would have done. Imagine Liberace as an inner-city high school basketball star who'd just signed an NBA contract and converted to Islam.

had been highly specific, though awesome within its specificity. Uday Hussein's Olympic-training facility and supposed personal headquarters was erased, the rubble too flat for low hurdles. The surrounding walls were untouched. An Interior Ministry building was a ten-story cinder, like the readable ash from a sheet of burned newspaper. Damage caused by the armor attack on the city was noticeable because it was newer, crisper, and more clean-edged than the general deterioration of Baghdad.

The men in the streets were sullen, and they were enthusiastic, and they were both. They stood with their buddies, glaring at American soldiers, and then rushed up to those soldiers to try to sell them something or change money. The women in the streets looked put-upon and harassed. Keeping the kids from playing on the tanks was just one more damn thing. The little boys carried ballpoint pens and wanted to have their arms signed by the soldiers.

Broken glass and twisted window grates from looting were all over the sidewalks. The improvised stalls of tradesmen were all over the sidewalks too. How much of the trade was in loot I couldn't tell. The citizens of Baghdad were selling a lot of cigarettes and two-liter bottles of Fanta orange soda to one another. They were busy, though not with brooms and mops. I did see one man washing his car, however.

And there was another man, standing by his car in a

dad monument, a hundred-foot-tall split onion dome with both dome halves covered inside and out in bright-blue glazed ceramic tile. "We call it 'the tits,'" said a sentry at the monument's gate.

"Do you know what that is?" asked a reproving captain in whose Humvee I was riding. "It's the tomb of the Iraqi Unknown Soldier."

"Yes, sir," a second sentry said. "You'll find the colonel somewhere over by the eggshells."

Actually, the Unknown Soldier memorial was back across the river, at the crossed-swords parade ground. The dome sections (which more closely resemble baboon butt cheeks) memorialize *known* Iraqi soldiers—the million or so killed in the war with Iran. Their names and military units are inscribed in profusion around the structure's base, and inside, glass cases are full of the soldiers' belongings. This "Martyrs' Monument" is dedicated to ordinary Iraqis, although, according to the armored battalion's colonel, the only people allowed to visit it under Saddam's rule were members of the Baath Party. One section of the interior was reserved solely for Saddam and his immediate family.

Saddam's family, or their moral ilk, had been using the Martyrs' Monument as a chop shop for stolen automobiles. An Iraqi carpenter hired to repair the car-thief damage was scared to go into the forbidden Saddam zone.



The looting of antiquities from the Iraq National Museum was not a good example of America's failure to protect Iraq's heritage. Dug in on the museum's grounds were squadrons of paramilitary *fedayeen*—not a part of Iraq's heritage that needed preserving. And do you shoot looters? A man running down the street with a 200-pound head of Nebuchadnezzar in his arms can't hurt you. If you shoot someone who's got a Winged Lion of Assyria, he'll turn out to be a museum curator taking it home for safekeeping—or it will be a plastic Winged Lion of Assyria lawn ornament.

American tanks were guarding the National Museum with horse-gone, barn-door-closed acuity. I asked a tank crew, "Do you shoot looters?"

"Our operational orders are supposed to be secret," one crew member said.

"No," said another.

The looting of antiquities wasn't a good example of much of anything, considering where the objects in museums come

shot open even on some newly delivered file cabinets, empty and still in their shipping wrappers. The staffer, an older man, smoothed pieces of paper. If it was an important piece of paper, he put it in a folder and sighed. If it wasn't, he threw it away and cursed. Every now and then a janitor would shove the discarded papers back into the unsorted pile. The rest of the museum staff sat around.

I'd come to the museum with soldiers from a Civil Affairs battalion. They were reservists with nonmilitary skills—firemen, policemen, engineers. One sergeant was getting his Ph.D. in sociology. With aid agencies yet to arrive, Civil Affairs had the job of fixing everything in Iraq that didn't need to be killed, although Civil Affairs had guns, too. Donny George gave the soldiers a tour of the museum, and I went with them.

The galleries were a crime scene, but the parts of the museum that aren't open to the public were the scene of something else. Windows were broken. Furniture was smashed. Copiers, coffee makers, typewriters, and telephones had been thrown around the rooms, and bullets had been fired into ceilings and walls. Bookshelves had been pulled over, and books and publications had been ripped and tossed. Archive photos were torn. Microfilm was unspooled and festooned like the remains of a ticker-tape parade in negative.

Rows of ancient pots had been staved in. Drawers' worth of carefully catalogued scholarly fragments had been further fragmentized. "Be careful," George said, "because you might be stepping on antiquities." Thousands-of-years-old crunches sounded under our feet.

The restoration studio was ruined. Tools were bent and broken. This wasn't looting. A gold Lyre of Ur had been stripped of its gold leaf; the lyre itself was on the floor. "Vandalism" was not the word. The Vandals controlled the Mediterranean with their sea

power and forced the Roman Emperor Valentinian III to make peace. They must have had brains. The people who did this to the National Museum were brainless enough to have gone to college with me. I remember just such a scene visited upon a persnickety landlord of off-campus housing. But I don't think that the worst of my keg buddies would have trashed America's heritage. The looted Sumerians themselves, back from the dead and as drunk as the lords they were, couldn't get this worked up at a museum.

One of the broken statues looked kind of Greek. "Hellenistic period," I said, in a lucky guess, to George. He smiled at me and began answering my media queries before I'd had a chance to make any.

"There were three groups of looters," George said. "First there were the experts." He explained that they had come equipped with glass cutters and battery-operated saws with stone-cutting blades. They knew what they were after and didn't take replicas or objects that had been over-restored.

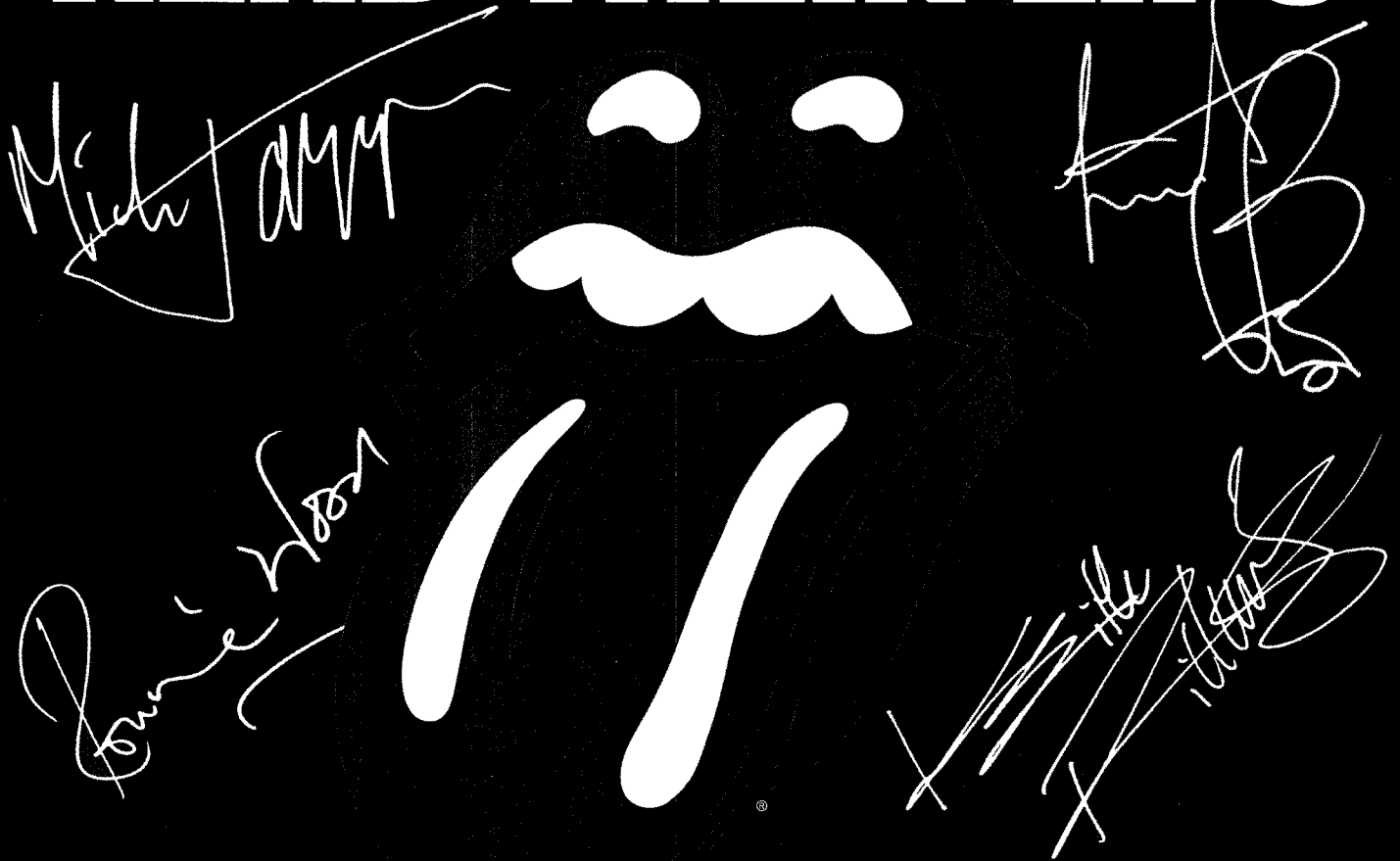


from in the first place. Also, many of the most valuable archaeological treasures were hidden by the museum's staff. Others are trickling back to the museum. The Sumerian Sacred Vase of Warka was restituted by its liberators in June. According to *USA Today*, "The men returned the vase because they realized its importance to Iraq's heritage, officials said."

The official in charge the day I was at the museum, the director of research, Donny George, said, "Starting from yesterday we've stopped talking to the media." Television camera crews, news photographers, and other journalists had swept through the museum, grabbing images of pillage and snatching quotations from the staff.

One staff member sat atop what archaeologists call—or will call in a thousand years—a midden pile. The museum's lobby was heaped with crumpled records, letters, bills, and receipts. File cabinets had been pulled into the open space, and their locks had been shot open. The locks had been

# READ THEIR LIPS



## THE ROLLING STONES



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"Then there were the opportunists." He said that they took whatever they could and did most of the damage. "But then there is a third group—I don't know who they are. I don't understand. They are determined to burn all the libraries and archives in Baghdad, in all the colleges, at Baghdad University. They burned the central library. They burned all the postgraduate studies at the colleges. They burned the library here at the museum—just the library, not the other parts."

While I was interviewing George, curators from another museum arrived. This was the Museum of Modern Art, formerly known as the Saddam Hussein Museum of Modern Art, now renamed (for the moment, at least), as are the Saddam International Airport, the Saddam City housing project, the Saddam Hospital, and so on. It takes a certain kind of name to name everything after yourself. "P. J." wouldn't do: Pajama International Airport, Pajama City, Museum of Modern Pajamas.

The Museum of Modern Art had been looted too. "Three or four hours ago we were chasing the looters," one of the curators said. But the staff had managed to get most of the museum's collection locked in the basement. Now, however, Baghdad's sewage system was backing up. Sewage was

edgy and brutalist and, frankly, improved by the vandalism. Broken glass and shredded exhibit posters covered the entranceway. A young man in a disco haircut, sharply creased pants, and shiny expensive shoes came to the gate. "Can I get into the museum?" he asked.

The sergeant who was getting his Ph.D. in sociology said, "It's very closed."

We dropped a truckload of art at the National Museum, half a mile away. I stayed behind to talk to Donny George.

Returning on foot, I got lost. Baghdad was, again, like Washington: I didn't have to wander far from the edifices to get into a slum. But rather than leave the poor to the vagaries of outdated housing stock, the Iraqis build their slums new. The two-story hovels, with a window apiece, were made of cement blocks left unpainted. There were tiny stores along the street. The shelves were vacant. People were loitering. I heard "Hello, American" several times from kids. I got "Welcome, please" from a couple of proprietors of empty stores. There were a few hard stares from young men, who muttered after I'd passed. There were a few fewer wan smiles from old people.

I was in a flak vest that Major Bob insisted I wear for a

**Seeing a piece from a distance, Major Bob would say, "Now, that's a really bad Chagall"—but it would turn out to be painted in Chagall's extremely late period, when he was dead, and would be signed by someone local.**

flooding into the museum cellar, and Iraq's entire collection of modern art was in peril.

The curators appealed to the Civil Affairs soldiers. "We need trucks," one of the curators said, "to bring the paintings here, where they will be guarded." The men from the Museum of Modern Art said it was America's responsibility. They said it was America's duty. They didn't say it was America's fault. But they were thinking it. And I was thinking that among the things America *didn't* bomb in Baghdad were the sewer outlets into the Tigris.

**M**ajor Bob woke me up the next morning. "The Civil Affairs guys scrounged a truck," he said. "We're going to save the modern art of Iraq."

It was 100° by 10:00 A.M. Iraq's works of modern art tend to the large, also the numerous. We moved them from the mucky basement to the dirty truck as carefully as we could. Seeing a piece from a distance, Major Bob would say, "Now, that's a really bad Chagall"—but it would turn out to be painted in Chagall's extremely late period, when he was dead, and would be signed by someone local. "Well," Major Bob said, "it's their heritage, not ours."

The museum building had been rubbished. A couple of modern sculptures, too big to be hidden, were looking

visit to Baghdad, and my clothes were khaki from dirt. But I was too old to be a soldier, and I didn't have a television camera, so I couldn't be a journalist. I don't know how I appeared to the Iraqis. Mostly I didn't. I was invisible to the majority of people. Seventeen years ago, in Belfast, British troops had this invisibility. Squadrons in battle gear would patrol the Republican stronghold of Divis Flats, and to the Irish they weren't there. The British have ended up spending nine centuries in Ireland.

I found my way back to the Museum of Modern Art. A television crew from Bahrain had arrived. The soldiers were being interviewed about the importance of Iraq's cultural heritage. An eight-foot canvas depicting an innocent Iraqi being smothered by an American flag and pecked by a bald eagle had just been pulled from the cellar. The TV reporter, Saad al-Hasani, was also an assistant professor of English at the University of Baghdad. I asked him if he knew anything about the "third group" of looters who Donny George had said were burning libraries.

Professor al-Hasani had gone to stay with relatives in the country during the war. His apartment in Baghdad had been looted. He'd expected that. But someone had carried all his books down to the apartment building's yard and burned them.

"I teach modern theater," he said. "My specialty is Samuel Beckett and the theater of the absurd. I'd always had trouble explaining Beckett to my students. They didn't comprehend the theater of the absurd. Then, after the war in 1991, my students suddenly were starting to understand *Waiting for Godot*. I could tell by the questions they asked in class, by their essays. It was as if they were anticipating something. There was a situation in the air. A student came up to me and said, 'This is just like *Waiting for Godot*. Nobody comes. Nobody goes. It's awful. *Nothing to be done*.'"

I told Professor al-Hasani about the book cover in the airport administration-building locker. Would air-traffic con-

"You have seen the backside of war," the electrical engineer said.

In the morning Major Bob woke me again. "We're going to the French Quarter with Civil Affairs," he said. I thought proudly about the written report—for a few minutes. Then the Civil Affairs battalion commander said, "Some Special Forces guys were patrolling through there. They told us it was a mess. We're only supposed to do an assessment, but we've scrounged some tools and we were scrounging around in the terminal and found a bunch of antibiotics and medical supplies the Iraqis had hidden."

We were greeted by the village elder who'd said the water main was broken. Without the formidable woman, he was more talkative. He said the American attack on the airport had come through the middle of the French Quarter. The area had been defended by Iraqi secret police, but not very well, to judge by the slight shell and bullet damage. The village elder said he'd been a fire chief for thirty years. The French Quarter was not a cap to his career. After a secret-police vehicle was hit by an American rocket, a house caught fire, and the entire block burned down. Ten families were left homeless, but fortunately they were homeless already, having fled from the war.

Tarik al-Wasty, a carpenter and pipe fitter at the airport, had spent the five days of the bombing and assault lying on the floor of his house with his wife and ten children. He showed me a hole where a tank round had come into his garden, and offered me tea. His two-year-old son was still

terrified, would sleep only if curled beneath his father, and was coughing continually. A medical corpsman brought some drugs from the Iraqi cache. The corpsman tried to explain to Tarik, whose English was not good, that steam could be used to help clear the child's chest. Getting a blank stare, the corpsman attempted charades and was prevented from persuading Tarik to boil his toddler in a pot by the family's nine-year-old son, whose English was excellent.

The electrical-engineer lieutenant colonel had discovered other electrical engineers among the French Quarter residents. They were probing the innards of a transformer. The mechanical-engineer major had found additional engineers. They were inspecting the water main, which had been crushed by a tank. "I think I know where there's a big piece of pipe I can scrounge," the mechanical engineer said.

Major Bob and I looked at the one public building I saw



trollers and aeronautical engineers be reading *Godot* too?

"Of course," he said.

That evening at the airport a major and a lieutenant colonel from the Civil Affairs battalion drove the truck around scrounging material to build a latrine. The major was a mechanical engineer. The colonel was an electrical engineer. They argued as if they were married.

"We can build a lighter frame if we stress the plywood in monocoque construction."

"Fuck lightness—compression equals strength."

I pounded nails, rather crookedly. It was an innovative outhouse. Cut-down fifty-five-gallon oil drums were set on airport luggage trolleys so that waste cans could be rolled in under the seats.

ODD ANDERSEN / AP PHOTO



in Iraq that hadn't been looted—a school. There were only a few bullet holes in the walls. The school was decorated with murals of Smurfs and Mickey Mouse drawn, it looked like, by the painter of the Chagalls at the Museum of Modern Art.

The fire chief and some of his friends gave us a tour of the village. The houses were prefab semidetached, and looked like modest European vacation cottages but with bomb shelters in their yards. Recreation facilities had been provided for the construction workers—a picnic area, a swimming pool, tennis and volleyball courts. The nets were gone. The poles were bent double. The swimming pool was half filled with chunks of concrete. The picnic area was layered in trash. The fire chief said something about “repairs forbidden” and that the French Quarter had fallen out of favor with Saddam Hussein. If appearances were any indication, so had the rest of Iraq.

“Having looked at the Mideast,” Major Bob said, “I realize how the Arabs came up with the concept of zero.”

**W**ill a strong, stable Iraq emerge from the chaos? And is that what we want? When Iraq was strong and stable, it attacked Israel in the 1967 and 1973 wars. It attacked Iran. It attacked Kuwait. It gassed the Kurds. It butchered the Shiites. It fostered terrorism in the Middle East.

Will the Iraqi people become part of the modern, free, and prosperous world? That's possible, though I have only one piece of anecdotal evidence to go by. I was riding through Baghdad in the last truck in an Army convoy, with a unit that will go unidentified because drinking is a punishable offense for U.S. troops in Iraq. We spotted a man selling beer on the street. “I’d better stop,” said the sergeant who was driving, “and check my windshield-wiper-fluid level or something.”

I jumped out of the truck. “Let me do this,” I said. “I’ve been coming to the Middle East for twenty years. I *know* how to *haggle*.”

“How much for the whole case?” I asked the vendor in pidgin and gesture.

“Twenty bucks,” he said.

Twenty dollars was a fortune in Baghdad at that moment. Also, I didn’t have twenty dollars. I had a ten and a bunch of Kuwaiti dinars. The vendor looked askance at the dinars. The soldiers weren’t carrying much money either. They came up with another six dollars among them.

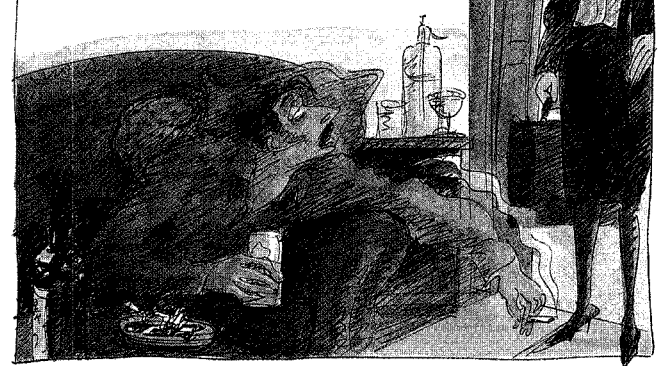
I dickered with the beer merchant. He bargained. I chiselled. We bandied. A crowd gathered to watch. Some teenage Iraqi boys, seeing an Asian-American soldier in the truck, hollered, “*Thigh Cone Do!*” and exhibited awkward kicks.

The seller of beer and I concluded a deal of considerable financial complexity involving U.S. dollars and Kuwaiti dinars, with change in Iraqi dinars at an exchange rate determined by consensus among the purchase’s spectators.

Back in the truck, as we tried to catch up with our convoy, I did the math. I had bargained my way from \$20 to a final price of \$24.50. And the beer turned out to be nonalcoholic. Baghdad will be Houston *with* Enron. ■

1930

**LILLIAN HELLMAN**, A \$50-A-WEEK READER AT MGM AND NO BEAUTY AT 25, MEETS HANDSOME DASHIELL HAMMETT, 36, IN A HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT. AN AFFAIR ENSUES. SHE LEAVES HER HUSBAND (A LOW-LEVEL SCREENWRITER) AND MOVES IN WITH THE CELEBRATED CREATOR OF SAM SPADE.



1938

WITH HAMMETT IN HOLLYWOOD AND INGERSOLL IN NEW YORK, HELLMAN ENJOYS A BI-COASTAL MÉNAGE À TROIS UNTIL HAMMETT COLLAPSES FROM ALCOHOL AND GONORRHEA. WHEN HE RECOVERS, HELLMAN SUMMONS HIM, INGERSOLL, AND HER FIRST HUSBAND (?) FOR A DRAMATIC SHOWDOWN. WHEN THE SHOUTING ENDS, INGERSOLL IS OUT.



1952

HELLMAN IS SUBPOENAED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES. DETERMINED NOT TO NAME NAMES OR PLEAD THE FIFTH, SHE DECLINES (IN A LETTER HANDED TO THE PRESS) TO CUT HER CONSCIENCE "TO FIT THIS YEAR'S FASHIONS," BUT SHE DOES "TAKE THE FIFTH," WHICH WAS THAT YEAR'S FASHION.





1934

THEY MOVE TO NEW YORK. HELLMAN TAKES A JOB AS A READER FOR THE BROADWAY PRODUCER/DIRECTOR HERMAN SHUMLIN. AFTER A TIME SHE SLIPS IN HER OWN PLAY, *THE CHILDREN'S HOUR*, AND RECOMMENDS THAT HE PRODUCE IT. IT OPENS TO LAVISH PRAISE, LANDING HER IN THE FOREFRONT OF AMERICAN DRAMATISTS.



"...ONE OF THE MOST STRAIGHT FORWARD DRIVING DRAMAS OF THE SEASON."

1938

ON A FLIGHT FROM HOLLYWOOD, WHERE HELLMAN HAS BEEN WRITING SCREENPLAYS, HER PLANE IS FORCED TO LAND IN ALBUQUERQUE. SHE AND *FORUM* EDITOR RALPH INGERSOLL, A FELLOW PASSENGER, MEET AND SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER. IN THE MORNING INGERSOLL PREPARES TO TELL HIS WIFE HE'S IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN.



1939

HELLMAN'S *TIE LITTLE FOXES* OPENS. THE CAST PLANS A BENEFIT PERFORMANCE FOR FINLAND, WHICH HAS BEEN INVADIED BY THE SOVIET UNION. HELLMAN, AN ADMIRER OF STALIN, REFUSES TO ALLOW IT. "I'VE BEEN [TO FINLAND]," SHE SAYS, "AND IT LOOKS LIKE A PRO-NAZI LITTLE REPUBLIC TO ME." IN FACT EVIDENCE SUGGESTS SHE HAS NEVER BEEN IN FINLAND.



1941

IN SPITE OF STALIN'S PURGES, HELLMAN REMAINS CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS THE ONLY COUNTRY ASPIRING TO CREATE A MORE JUST WORLD. HEARING THAT HITLER HAS INVADIED RUSSIA, SHE DRESSES ALL IN WHITE AND BURSTS INTO THE HOME OF A FRIEND, SHRIEKING, "THE MOTHERLAND HAS BEEN INVADIED."



HAVING CONVINCED THE PUBLIC THAT SHE BRAVELY STOOD HER GROUND AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNTERS, HELLMAN FEELS ENTITLED TO PUNISH THOSE SHE DECIDES BEHAVED DISHONORABLY. LEAVING A RESTAURANT, SHE ENCOUNTERS ABE BURROWS, A PLAYWRIGHT WHO NAMED NAMES, AND SPITS IN HIS FACE.



1984

FACING EXPOSURE IN COURT FOR EXTENSIVE FABRICATIONS IN HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY, HELLMAN DIES. HER ESTATE IS WORTH \$4 MILLION, IN PART BECAUSE SHE FINAGLED THE RIGHTS TO HAMMETT'S WORK, WHICH SHOULD HAVE GONE TO HIS DAUGHTERS. AT HER FUNERAL SHE IS HAIKED FOR HER "INTEGRITY, DECENCY, UPRIGHTNESS."



LITERARY LIVES by Edward Sorel



# HOW TO KILL A COUNTRY

*Turning a breadbasket into a basket case in ten easy steps—  
the Robert Mugabe way*

BY SAMANTHA POWER

*Illustration by John Ritter*

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Nearly forty years ago Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, became the first and only white colonial ruler to break away from the British Crown. He had tired of London's nagging about the subjugation of Rhodesian blacks. In 1965 Smith declared independence. "The mantle of the pioneers has fallen on our shoulders," he said, calling on white Rhodesians to maintain standards in a "primitive country." Smith saw himself as an apostle of Cecil John Rhodes, the British magnate who gave Rhodesia its name, and who in the late nineteenth century duped black tribal leaders into signing over the fertile land to white pioneers. Although Rhodesia in 1965 was home to just over 200,000 whites and four million blacks, Smith shared Rhodes's belief that black majority rule would occur "never in a thousand years."

Smith was of course wrong. In 1980, after a civil war that cost 30,000 lives, the black majority took charge of the country, which was renamed Zimbabwe. Robert Mugabe—the nationalist leader whom Smith had branded a "Marxist terrorist" and jailed for more than a decade; a man who had once urged his followers to stop wearing shoes and socks to show they were willing to reject the trappings of European civilization—became President.

Zimbabwe, one of southern Africa's most prosperous countries, held great promise. Its Victoria Falls was one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Its gushing Zambezi River boasted wildlife and pulsing rapids. Its lush soil was the envy of a continent. And, though landlocked, the country had modernized sensibly: it had a network of paved roads, four airports, and, thanks to Mugabe's leadership, a rigorous and inclusive education system. Mugabe knew that whites drove the economy, and he was pragmatic. "Good old Bob," as white farmers quickly came to call him, kept his shoes and socks on, and urged reconciliation: "An evil remains an evil whether practiced by white against black or black against white," he said on the eve of independence. In a cordial meeting with Smith, Mugabe acknowledged that he had inherited the "jewel of Africa," and he vowed to keep it that way.

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"I was very pleasantly surprised," says Smith, who still lives in Zimbabwe. "He spoke like a sophisticated Westerner. He was very courteous: it was 'Mr. Smith this' and 'Mr. Smith that.'" That Ian Smith has stayed in Zimbabwe is itself surprising. But it is even more remarkable that the man who once ran an election campaign promising "a whiter, brighter Rhodesia" does not live as other well-to-do Zimbabweans do—behind a bolted gate manned by forbidding security forces. For three years, with Zimbabwe imploding politically and economically, Mugabe has been inciting violence against whites. Yet Smith's spacious home, next door to the Cuban embassy in the capital, Harare, is shielded by neither a guard post nor a guard dog—only by purple jacaranda trees. When I visited him, earlier this year, Smith's driveway gate and his front door stood wide open, offering passersby an inviting glimpse of his plush Victorian furnishings.

Swallowed up by a Queen Anne armchair, Smith, a bone-thin eighty-four-year-old, told me that all he ever wanted to do in life was manage his 4,000-acre farm, 220 miles southwest of Harare. He has run the farm since he returned from flying Spitfires for the British in World War II. He grows oranges and seed potatoes, and raises cattle. "I hope I don't sound arrogant," he said, "but you won't find a better-run piece of land." Smith insists that when Mugabe banned him from politics, in 1987, he was glad for the opportunity to return to full-time farming. But in Zimbabwe, where whites owned the finest farmland and most blacks remained dispossessed two decades after independence, politics and land became inseparable. A few days before my visit Smith was reading the morning newspaper when he came across a government notice listing the latest batch of farms designated for seizure by the state. His farm was among them.

For a man who had just learned that he would lose his livelihood, his passion, and his family home, Smith was strangely unflustered. Largely ignored since independence, he seems to have found in the blind bungling of Robert Mugabe's regime a grim redemption for white rule. "You can't imagine how many people come up to me





and say, 'We didn't agree with you back then. We thought you were too rigid and inflexible. But now we see you were right. You were so right: they were not fit to govern.'"

The "they," of course, is the black majority. But Smith is drawing the wrong lesson. Although Zimbabwe is as broken as any country on the planet, it offers a testament not to some inherent African inability to govern but to a minority rule as oppressive and inconsiderate of the welfare of citizens as its ignominious white predecessor. The country's economy in 1997 was the fastest growing in all of Africa; now it is the fastest shrinking. A onetime net exporter of maize, cotton, beef, tobacco, roses, and sugarcane now exports only its educated professionals, who are fleeing by the tens of thousands. Although Zimbabwe has some of the richest farmland in Africa, children with distended bellies have begun arriving at school looking like miniature pregnant women.

How could the breadbasket of Africa have deteriorated so quickly into the continent's basket case? The answer is Robert Mugabe, now seventy-nine, who by his actions has compiled something of a "how-to" manual for national destruction. Although many of his methods have been applied elsewhere, taken as a whole his ten-step approach is more radical and more comprehensive than that of other despots. The Zimbabwe case offers some important insights. It illustrates the prime importance of accountability as an antidote to idiocy and excess. It highlights the lasting effects of decolonization—limited Western influence on the continent and a reluctance by African leaders to criticize their own. And it offers a warning about how much damage one man can do, very quickly.

## Destroy the engine of productivity

The Harare Sports Club, a Rhodesian throwback, sits kitty-corner from Mugabe's private residence. I was told ahead of time by locals that the patrons would be mostly white ex-farmers "crying into their beer." Inside, towering, bull-necked men lined the bar. Most were chain-smoking, and they did seem quite wobbly. A television hanging from the ceiling played reruns of Tim Henman's latest Wimbledon tease. At the entrance to the club is a sports shop, which sells squash rackets and cricket bats. The place is Old England in a capsule, and yet the paint is chipped, the tabs are unpaid, and the lively chatter, once about crop yields and rugby scores, now focuses on court dates and emigration plans.

Pat Ashton, a stocky, white-haired fifty-five-year-old farmer, stops in at least twice a month. Ashton grew up in Cheshire, England, and moved to Rhodesia in 1971. Trusting Mugabe's moderate rhetoric, he made a down payment on a farm the year after independence. It took him two decades to pay back his loans, but in 2001 he finally did so. The Ashton farm grew mangoes, tobacco, maize, and flat

peas, grossing about \$800,000 annually. His workers didn't earn enough to buy their own land ("I probably could have done more to make them self-sufficient," he admits), but he did build them a village of some ninety houses, a social hall, a football field, and a medical clinic. Ashton reinvested virtually all of his surplus in the farm.

In July of 2001 about fifty people who lived in the nearby town arrived on his land. Most were miners, and they were led by three officials from the Mugabe government. The group began surveying Ashton's property and marking out plots for homes. The next six months were a constant battle. The settlers returned and erected makeshift thatch huts in the middle of Ashton's maize and tobacco fields. They dug up his maize crops, beat up his farm workers, and removed and bent his irrigation pipes. Still Ashton hung on, living in his farmhouse and planting and harvesting what he could. In January of 2002 four trucks arrived, containing youth militia and men claiming they were veterans of the liberation war collecting their reward for service. This time the invaders attacked Ashton, with steel rods and an ax, cutting him in the forearm and badly damaging his pickup truck as he tried to escape. They held two of his sons hostage for a day, threatening to execute them and making them chant songs in praise of the ruling party. As the invaders carted away all the Ashton family's transportable belongings—from crockery to toilet seats—the police watched with amusement and then decided to join in.

Ashton is more sympathetic than many other farmers, but the story of his eviction is fairly typical. In 2000, about 4,000 large-scale commercial farmers owned some 70 percent of Zimbabwe's arable land. Nearly two thirds of these farmers had bought their farms after independence, and thus held titles issued not by Ian Smith or the British colonial regime but by the Mugabe government. Mugabe had long pledged land reform as a way of redistributing farmland to black peasants and dismantling what many saw as the country's "mini-Rhodesias." But he had delayed action for two decades, generally taking farms only on a "willing seller, willing buyer" basis.

Mugabe decided on what he called "fast-track land reform" only in February of 2000, after he got shocking results in a constitutional referendum: though he controlled the media, the schools, the police, and the army, voters rejected a constitution he put forth to increase his power even further. A new movement was afoot in Zimbabwe: the Movement for Democratic Change—a coalition of civic groups, labor unions, constitutional reformers, and heretofore marginal opposition parties. Mugabe blamed the whites and their farm workers (who, although they together made up only 15 percent of the electorate, were enough to tip the scales) for the growth of the MDC—and for his humiliating rebuff.

So he played the race card and the land card. "If white settlers just took the land from us without paying for it," the

President declared, "we can, in a similar way, just take it from them without paying for it." In 1896 Africans had suffered huge casualties in an eighteen-month rebellion against British pioneers known as the *chimurenga*, or "liberation war." The war that brought Zimbabwean blacks self-rule was known as the second *chimurenga*. In the immediate aftermath of his referendum defeat Mugabe announced a third *chimurenga*, invoking a valiant history to animate a violent, country-wide land grab.

Initially, the farmers held their ground, but it became clear after several white farmers were murdered that they were too few and Mugabe's regime was too determined. Of the 4,000 large-scale commercial farmers in business three years ago, all but 500 have been forced off their land. Most Zimbabweans (including white farmers) say that land reform was both necessary and inevitable. The tragedy of Mugabe's approach is that it has harmed those whom a well-ordered, selective redistribution program could and should have helped. Generally the farms have not been given to black farm managers or farm workers. Indeed, because of their association with the opposition, more than a million farm workers and their dependents have been displaced, and they are now at grave risk of starvation. In fact, the beneficiaries of the land seizures are, with few exceptions, ruling-party officials and friends of the President's. Although Mugabe's people seem to view the possession of farms as a sign of status (the Minister of Home Affairs has five; the Minister of Information has three; Mugabe's wife, Grace, and scores of influential party members and their relatives have two each), these elites don't have the experience, the equipment, or, apparently, the desire to run them. About 130,000 formerly landless peasants helped the ruling elites to take over the farms, but now that the dirty work is done, many of them are themselves being expelled.

The drop-off in agricultural production is staggering. Maize farming, which yielded more than 1.5 million tons annually before 2000, is this year expected to generate just 500,000 tons. Wheat production, which stood at 309,000 tons in 2000, will hover at 27,000 tons this year. Tobacco production, too, which at 265,000 tons accounted for nearly a third of the total foreign-currency earnings in 2000, has tumbled, to about 66,000 tons in 2003.

Mugabe's belief that he can strengthen his flagging popularity by destroying a resented but economically vital minority group is one that dictators elsewhere have shared. Paranoid about their diminishing support, Stalin wiped out the wealthy kulak farming class, Idi Amin purged Uganda's Indian commercial class, and, of course, Hitler went after Jewish businesses even though Germany was already reeling from the Depression. Whatever spikes in popularity these moves generated, the economic damage was profound, and the dictators had to exert great effort to mask it.

## Bury the truth

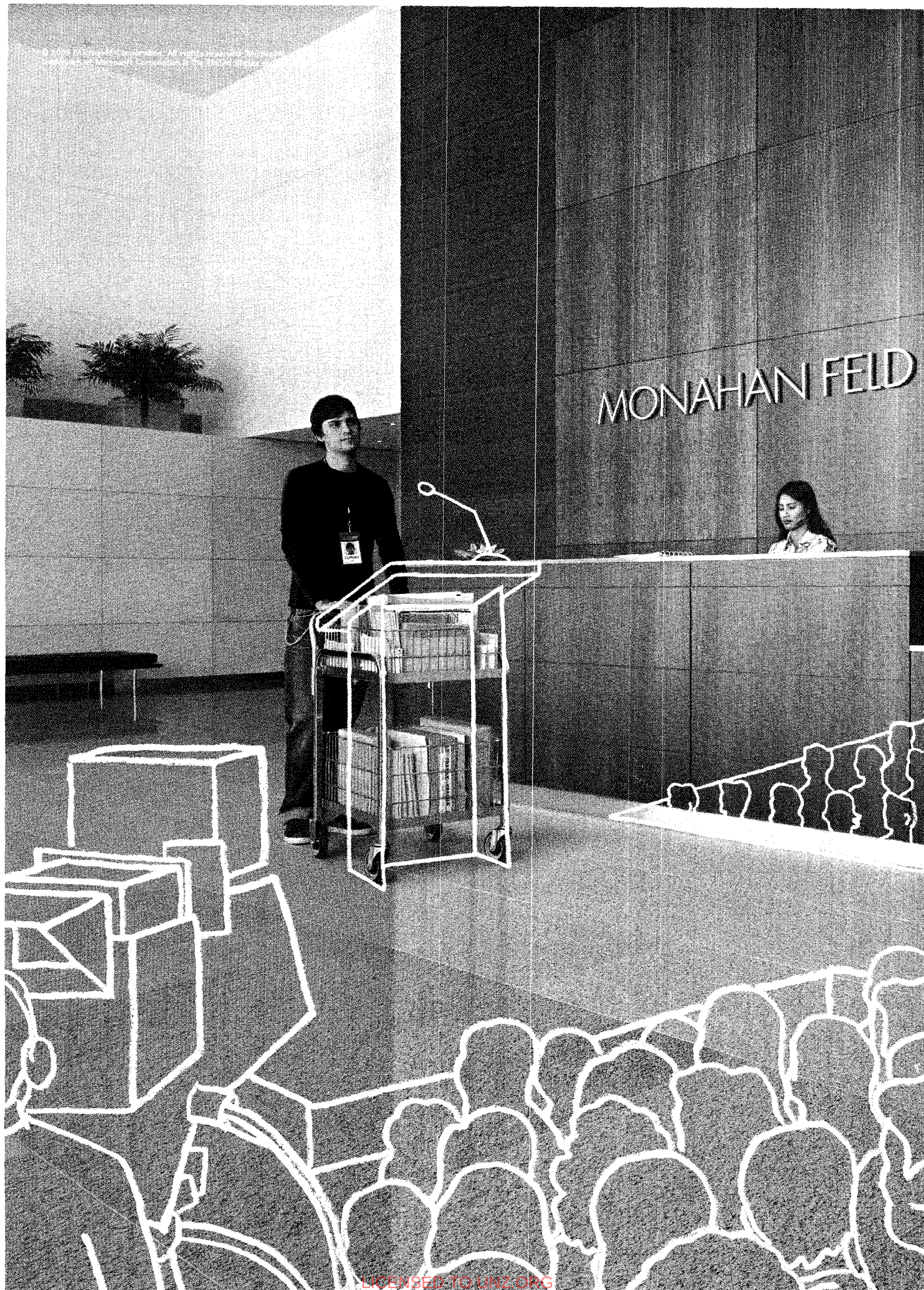
Zimbabweans get their news from state television, "the first and permanent media choice for every Zimbabwean." The station is required to play at least once every hour a social-realist commercial accompanied by the jingle "Rambai Makashinga," or "Persevere." The ad shows youthful, chiseled Zimbabweans, dressed in designer jeans, dancing in maize and wheat fields as they cheerily harvest the season's crops. Many are wearing yellow and green, the colors of the ruling party. One is wearing a T-shirt bearing the number 23, signifying Mugabe's years in power. The maize is shucked to the beat, and the hoes land rhythmically in the rich red soil. The commercial reminds starving Zimbabweans what they got from their liberation from white rule: Nike sneakers and crops aplenty.

More representative of the country's actual situation is the state of the fertile crescent north of the capital. If Zimbabwe is Africa's breadbasket, the Mazowe Valley is the breadbasket of the breadbasket. Yet driving through it today is like visiting a refugee camp that has been hit by a hurricane. Fields that should brim with knee-high, forest-green winter wheat now contain only the crackling yellow stubble of last year's crop. The barbed wire that once hemmed in cattle has been ripped away by squatters, who have plopped down cheap cement houses in the middle of arable fields and killed off cows and sheep for food. Surviving cattle wander, emaciated, onto the roads. Untended, they are riddled with foot-and-mouth disease, dooming what was once a thriving cattle-export business. Irrigation equipment lies derelict and rusting; much of it has been dismantled and sold as scrap metal.

Government food warehouses used to contain sacks of wheat and maize piled to the sky, but the warehouses, on which the vast majority of the population depends, now stand empty. Mugabe designated the state-run Grain Marketing Board as the sole buyer and distributor of maize and wheat in the country, and he fixed prices at a fraction of market value. In a country with moderate inflation this might have kept staples at affordable prices. But given that the prices of everything else in the country, including seed and fertilizer, are doubling each month, farmers can grow these vital crops only at a severe loss. As a result both commercial and small farmers have gotten out of the maize and wheat business, shifting to crops that are not price-controlled.

Mugabe handles the unprecedented food shortages the totalitarian way: he hides them, guarding the size of GMB stocks as carefully as he would military secrets. Longtime foreign correspondents have been expelled from the country, and local journalists dare not approach the GMB, for fear of arrest. Driving by one warehouse in Mvurwi, I observed a typically listless group of GMB workers in blue overalls lounging in the sunshine, smoking cigarettes, and stacking and restacking wooden pallets that would ordinarily be used to store the harvest. Nothing too explosive there. Yet







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when the GMB overseers saw they were being watched, they dispatched a posse of young men to pursue my vehicle in a harrowing (and, owing to their reluctance to waste scarce fuel, unsuccessful) car chase.

Zimbabweans are severely malnourished, and deaths from starvation occur even in the cities. The country has not yet suffered nationwide famine only because international donors have stepped in. Before Mugabe launched his *chimurenga*, the UN's World Food Programme relied on Zimbabwean agriculture to help keep the rest of Africa fed. It maintained only a small procurement office in Harare, staffed by a dozen people. Last year, however, the WFP had to overhaul its operation, hiring hundreds of international and Zimbabwean aid workers to distribute food in the country. Western governments have given the organization \$300 million to feed some 5.5 million Zimbabweans, nearly 50 percent of the country's population. (At the height of the Ethiopian famine, international donors fed just 20 percent of Ethiopia's citizens.)

Shortages are expected to be far more severe in the coming year. But instead of disclosing the country's true needs and requesting a helping hand, Mugabe's cabinet has delivered a passive-aggressive screed to the international community. In a twenty-four-page "appeal" delivered this past July, it defended the land seizures for "economically empowering the poor," and criticized donors for their "skepticism [toward] pro-poor policies." Everyone and everything was responsible for food shortages except the real culprit, Mugabe himself. By exaggerating Zimbabwe's crop yields in Potemkin fashion, the cabinet downplayed its needs, making it impossible for the WFP to get from donors (already stretched thin in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Liberia) the food Zimbabwe will need to stave off widespread starvation in 2004.

## Crush dissent

Zimbabweans are remarkably unshy about criticizing Robert Mugabe's rule. Ask a taxi driver how he is doing, and he will answer without hesitation: "I am suffering." Several months after rejecting Mugabe's proposed constitution, voters in the major cities swept the ruling party out of office, giving the MDC fifty-seven of the 120 contestable parliamentary seats. In March of last year, although the ruling party beat and tortured opponents, controlled media coverage of the campaign, and posted its armed watchdogs at election booths, the voters turned up—and by all unofficial accounts elected Morgan Tsvangirai, the head of the Movement for Democratic Change, to replace Mugabe as President.

Mugabe rigged the results, but Tsvangirai's supporters still call the opposition leader "Mr. President." Tsvangirai is a large man, a labor organizer who gives a rumpled impression despite his recent turn toward designer suits. "Mugabe underestimated the people and overestimated his invincibility," he told me when I met with him in August. Time will tell.

For now, instead of leading protests at home, or mobilizing pressure abroad, Tsvangirai spends his days in court—fending off charges of treason, which carry the death penalty. On the eve of Tsvangirai's stunning showing in the election, the government produced a grainy and unconvincing videotape showing him supposedly telling a shady Israeli businessman that he would like to "eliminate" Mugabe. Stuck in court, Tsvangirai hasn't appeared much in public since.

The MDC's message has been circulated by the *Daily News*, the country's only independent daily newspaper, which was launched in 1999 and quietly captured the highest newspaper readership in the country: it was so popular that it sold out by lunchtime. In January of 2001 Mugabe's Information Minister, Jonathan Moyo, described the paper as "a threat to national security which has to be silenced." Hours later the *Daily News* printing presses were destroyed by a bomb. This past September the government denied the irreverent paper a license, and the police shut it down.

Tsvangirai's international standing has thus far helped to keep him alive (although he was once beaten unconscious), but some of his followers have not been so lucky. About 250 Zimbabweans have died in political killings since the competition for power heated up, in 2000. According to Amnesty International, 70,000 incidents of torture and abuse took place in Zimbabwe last year alone. The government's most pervasive form of intimidation is also its most effective: the denial of food. While international aid groups try to feed Zimbabweans in rural areas, city folk must buy their maize and wheat from the sole distributor—the Grain Marketing Board. In order to get food they are often forced to produce a ruling-party membership card or to chant such slogans as "Long live Robert Mugabe!," "Down with whites!," and "Down with Morgan Tsvangirai!" Last year the former speaker of the parliament, Didymus Mutasa, stated, "We would be better off with only six million people, with our own people who support the liberation struggle. We don't want these extra people."

The Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen has famously argued that no functioning democracy has ever suffered a famine, because democratic governments "have to win elections and face public criticism, and have strong incentive to undertake measures to avert famines and other catastrophes." Like Pol Pot's Cambodia and Mao's China, Mugabe's Zimbabwe shows what can happen when political elites operate with no fear of being taken to task.

## Legislate the impossible

For all the lawlessness in Zimbabwe, the country in fact suffers from an overabundance of laws. Indeed, Mugabe has introduced so many economic edicts in the past year that most citizens have found it impossible to keep track. He fixed the price of a loaf of bread at half the bakers' break-even price, and levied astronomical fines on any baker who charged



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more. Bakers stopped making bread until somebody noticed that sesame bread, a “luxury item,” wasn’t price-controlled; by sprinkling a few sesame seeds on their standard loaves, bakers were able to get back in business. A pair of mortuary workers were arrested recently for running a profitable “rent-a-cadaver” business: because Mugabe had decreed that drivers in funeral processions would get privileged access to the trickle of fuel coming into the country, these entrepreneurs had begun leasing bodies to Zimbabwean drivers.

“Mugonomics,” as Mugabe’s brand of economic policy is known in Zimbabwe, addresses the symptoms of economic collapse, such as food and fuel shortages, but ignores the underlying causes. Inflation in Zimbabwe is expected to surpass 800 percent by year’s end. Unemployment is at 70 percent. Zimbabwe has its own dollar, but the highest (and rarest) currency denomination, a \$Z 1,000 note, cannot buy even a loaf of bread. Most transactions require hundreds of \$Z 50 and \$Z 100 bills. When Tsvangirai was arrested, several men were needed to carry his bail money to the Harare high court in huge cardboard boxes. Newspapers advertise “money rubber bands” and electronic money counters that “count 1,500 bills per minute.”

Because the rate of inflation is astronomical in comparison with the interest rates offered by banks, Zimbabweans are desperate to withdraw their savings in order to spend the money while it still has value. The banks say they would be happy to oblige—but they don’t have the cash. The government has so little foreign currency that it can’t pay to import the ink and the paper needed to print more bills or bills of higher denominations. In July desperate Zimbabweans began sleeping outside banks so as to be there when the doors opened. But because the banks limited the maximum withdrawal to the equivalent of \$2.50, patrons were rewarded for a night’s wait with just enough money to cover their bus fare home.

Mugabe has kept the official exchange rate fixed at 824 Zimbabwean dollars to one U.S. dollar, even though the black-market rate hovers around \$Z 5,000. Businessmen thus do their best to bypass official banks and government institutions, and the black market has become the only market of relevance. The state requires Zimbabweans who export goods to change 50 percent of their foreign earnings into local money at the official exchange rate. This means that every dollar converted loses almost all of its value—giving companies no incentive to bring money home, and worsening the severe cash shortage.

Forlorn Zimbabwean pensioners whose savings have vanished in a matter of months are reminiscent of the doleful Yugoslavs and Argentines who have endured similar implosions. The economic dynamic in Zimbabwe is perversely robust: while ordinary people suffer, black-market dealers and people with foreign bank accounts prosper, making them powerful stakeholders in the perpetuation of devastating economic policies.

## Teach hate

When Mugabe took over as President, fewer than half of Zimbabweans could read and write. He transformed the country—producing a literacy rate higher than 85 percent. Yet he may be remembered less for his education drive than for creating the “Green Bombers,” the youth militia that emerged from the National Youth Service Training Program, introduced after the ruling party’s dismal showing in the 2000 parliamentary elections.

Some 50,000 Zimbabweans aged ten to thirty have passed through the training program since it started. The youth academies initially advertised themselves as offering training in agriculture, construction, and other occupations, but they have morphed into a paramilitary and indoctrination enterprise. When dictators feel their support slipping among adults, it is not unusual for them to alter school textbooks in the hope of enlisting impressionable youths in their cause. And because tyrants never stop worrying about the loyalty of their militaries, they often establish ruling-party militias to act as personal guarantors of their safety in the event of assassination or coup attempts. In the service of the third *chimurenga* in Zimbabwe, students are taught how to make gasoline bombs and set up roadblocks. Elliot Manyika, a hard-line ruling-party official who now runs the program, says the training will teach youths to “change their mind-set ... and not aspire to be a servant of the white man,” especially now that “whites are going where they came from.” Many enroll reluctantly, because they know they have no chance of finding work otherwise: slots at university, at teacher and nurse training schools, and in the civil service are reserved for those who can produce certificates showing that they have graduated from a youth academy. Clad in green fatigues and red-and-green berets, those graduates who become Green Bombers vandalize MDC offices, harass Zimbabweans waiting for food, seize whites’ farms, confiscate newspapers, and intimidate voters and candidates.

## Scare off foreigners

The Mbare market, in Harare, is Zimbabwe’s largest bazaar. It contains more than a hundred stalls, selling African carvings, tapestries, and sculptures. In normal times at least four tourist buses and dozens of taxis visited the market every day. Yet when I arrived one Sunday, the vendors looked at me as though they were seeing the ghost of Cecil Rhodes. After a moment’s pause they rushed behind their stalls and hurriedly began polishing and propping up their wares. One of them told me I was his first customer of the month; it was July 27.

The murder of white farmers, the attacks on the opposition, and the theft of an election have obviously done nothing to help tourism. Nor has the disappearance of two indispensable travel items: cash and fuel. One Air Zimbabwe



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flight attendant recently explained a two-hour delay by telling passengers that the plane was waiting for a flight arriving from London “so we can siphon from its tank.” One of the reasons tourists used to visit Zimbabwe was its game parks. But many of the fences around the parks have been destroyed by squatters, and amid starvation, poachers have begun hunting even rare wildlife. Farm invaders running out of white commercial farms to seize have begun taking over wildlife preserves, creating safari parks for their personal viewing. Foreign capital is disappearing faster than the wildlife. When Mugabe called for the “indigenization of the economy,” he asserted pointedly that some Zimbabweans were “more indigenous than others.” It wasn’t only farmers who were threatened by the *chimurenga*. In 2000 “war veterans” invaded white-owned urban businesses—everything from hotels and department stores to the offices of foreign corporations. The remaining investors are running scared.

## Invade a neighbor

As even a democracy like the United States has shown, waging war can benefit a leader in several ways: it can rally citizens around the flag, it can distract them from bleak economic times, and it can enrich a country’s elites. In August of 1998 Robert Mugabe sent 11,000 soldiers—a third of his army—into the most menacing country in Africa: the Congo. He justified the invasion on the grounds that he was defending the sovereignty of an African country being invaded by Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian forces, which were backing a rebellion against the Congo’s President, Laurent Kabila. In reality, just as Saddam Hussein went after the oil in Kuwait, Mugabe had his eye on the Congo’s riches. “There are fortunes to be made in the Congo,” Tshinga Dube, one of Mugabe’s colonels, told a television interviewer, “so why rush to conquer the rebels?” Mugabe’s cronies did in fact get rich off diamonds, cobalt, and timber. But the war was extremely unpopular at home. As casualties mounted, some army officers grew restless and began plotting a coup, which was foiled in its planning stages. Mugabe dismissed his critics as “black white men wearing the master’s cap.” But it was harder for him to ignore the outrage of one of his key constituencies: the veterans of the 1970s liberation war, who saw fortunes being made in the Congo and began clamoring for the compensation Mugabe had promised them for their sacrifices. Mugabe thought he might placate the war veterans by offering up the white farms, but in the end, although the vets were the ones who expelled the white farmers, it is the country’s elites who got the farms. Zimbabwe’s troops are thought to have withdrawn from the Congo in September of last year, but the consequences of the war are more durable. In addition to unleashing the war veterans as a powerful political force, the Congo war consumed vast sums of money

that would have been better spent on medicine for the country’s dying people.

## Ignore a deadly enemy

Zimbabwe’s only real surplus is HIV, which has infected a third of the population, causing life expectancy to drop from fifty-six years in the early seventies to a deeply distressing thirty-five years today. In 1999 Mugabe’s government actually did something that no other African government had tried: it introduced an “AIDS levy”—a three percent tax on every Zimbabwean’s salary, which was to be used to fund AIDS prevention and treatment. Predictably, most of the money disappeared.

AIDS and food shortages have combined to generate what is called a “new variant famine,” in which hunger weakens the immune system, speeding HIV’s progression to full-blown AIDS. AIDS illnesses and deaths, in turn, further wreck the economy, reducing the number of communal farmers who can produce in the countryside, and forcing factories and mines to hire almost twice as many workers to secure the same amount of labor. Zimbabwe’s neighbors have begun to treat patients with anti-retrovirals, but Mugabe can’t afford the drugs. “Working here is pointless,” says Barbara Deve, the lone nurse in the impoverished Hatcliffe township, near Harare. “We write prescriptions knowing very well our patients don’t have the money to buy the medicines in the pharmacy. We say ‘go buy’ and ‘go buy,’ but it is just cruel theater.” Some 3,800 deaths from AIDS occur in Zimbabwe each week. Ignorance and misinformation persist. When an AIDS death occurs in a rural area, it is still common to hear the deceased described as having been “bewitched.” A recent poll revealed that condoms were thought to harbor HIV.

## Commit genocide

*Gukurahundi* refers to the seasonal Zimbabwean rains that wipe out the debris of the previous year’s crop. It signifies a purging of the old, a purification. In January of 1983 Robert Mugabe, a member of the ethnic Shona majority, ordered his North Korea-trained Fifth Brigade to carry out what he called a *gukurahundi* against the Ndebele people. The Ndebele account for about a fourth of the country’s population, and Mugabe felt that they threatened him because his chief political rival at the time, Joshua Nkomo, was a Ndebele. The Nazis gave us the Final Solution; the Serbs gave us “ethnic cleansing”; the Zimbabweans have given us “wiping away.”

Public discussion of the *gukurahundi* is forbidden in Zimbabwe. But George Mkwanzani, thirty-three, is the self-anointed keeper of Ndebele memory. Wearing thick spectacles that keep sliding down his nose, he doesn’t fit the image of a would-be rebel leader. But that is what he says he and others will become if Mugabe is not punished for the





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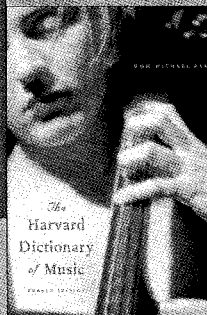
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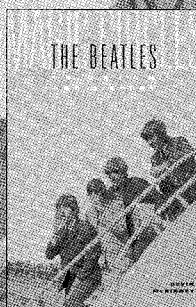
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murder of the Ndebele. "In the whole history of this country nobody ever caused such a loss of life, not even Cecil John Rhodes," Mkwanzani says. Rhodes's conquest left some 5,000 Ndebele dead. Mugabe's forces are thought to have killed 25,000. "When liberation was achieved, we never experienced it as a region," Mkwanzani says. "We were merely transferred from British colonialism to Shona colonialism. If Mugabe and his henchmen are not prosecuted, we will break away and create our own country, and we will find a way to make revenge against Mugabe. It will happen. It may sound like a dream, but ours is a brutalized past that has to be revisited. Five or ten years from now they will say, 'What that man was saying was true.'"

In an era of international justice, dictators with blood on their hands are afraid that if they relinquish power, they will end up prosecuted, like Slobodan Milosevic, or humiliated, like Augusto Pinochet. Mugabe knows that his massacres have been carefully documented by survivors and human-rights investigators, and he is right to be nervous. Tsvangirai, for his part, might be willing to accept a deal in which Mugabe was given a golden parachute to Nigeria (as Charles Taylor, of Liberia, was), but he knows that if he does so, his many Ndebele supporters may revolt. "I cannot stand up now and say, 'We will forgive Mugabe,' because I will be dead," Tsvangirai told me. "But neither can I say, 'We are going to send you to the Hague,' because he will say, 'Let me burn down the building.'"

## Blame the imperialists

Following the lead of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the United States and Europe have imposed sanctions against Mugabe and seventy-four members of his inner circle, freezing their assets, imposing a travel ban, and forbidding arms sales. But other nations, including Malaysia, Libya, and Venezuela, have been openly supportive of the Mugabe regime. Mugabe swats away American and European criticism by citing imperial sins. "How can these countries who have stolen land from the Red Indians, the Aborigines, and the Eskimos dare to tell us what to do with our land?" he has asked. Like Castro in Cuba, Mugabe is admired in the developing world for flouting the Western powers.

The foreigner who could wield the most influence in Zimbabwe is South African President Thabo Mbeki. But Mbeki, who has insisted on a "softly, softly" approach, often seems simply to be stalling in Mugabe's behalf. In September, with Zimbabwe in its worst condition since Mugabe came to power, Mbeki said that things had normalized. Although his African National Congress once benefited from sanctions in the fight against apartheid, he has called for the termination of those against Zimbabwe. When, in 2002, Tony Blair persuaded the Commonwealth of Nations to suspend Zimbabwe, Mbeki urged that Britain be the one to exit. "Those inspired by notions of white supremacy are free to depart if

they feel that membership of the association reduces them to a repugnant position imposed by inferior blacks," he said.

President Mbeki and other African heads of state are torn. On the one hand, they know that an "African renaissance" can't come about while Mugabe and people like him continue to wield power. On the other, they are power-hungry themselves, and they are terrified that their own liberation-era organizations will be left behind in such a renaissance. So they close ranks on racial and anti-imperial grounds.

But although Mugabe's neighbors in Africa may applaud the President at international conferences, they are privately taking steps to protect themselves against the Zimbabwean catastrophe. So many Zimbabwean refugees now flood South Africa that Mbeki grants entry only to those who can produce a bank statement proving financial solvency or a deposit of \$Z 300,000. His government also deports several thousand illegal Zimbabwean immigrants each week. Botswana has found itself so overrun by desperate Zimbabweans that it is erecting an electric fence 300 miles long. Meanwhile, Mugabe's anti-imperialist rhetoric, though an expedient balm at home, only deepens Zimbabwe's isolation from potential lenders, investors, and tourists.

Still, Mugabe will have the last word on Zimbabwe's fate. His cronies are clearly worried that if he clings to power indefinitely, the ruling party will sink with him. He is under pressure to choose a successor by the end of the year. But at seventy-nine, Mugabe may well decide to stick around, relying—though he would never admit it—on the United States and Britain to bail out his people with food aid.

If he hangs on, and if other African leaders don't force him out, Zimbabwe may go in one of two directions. Its destitute citizens might be so preoccupied with finding food and staying alive that they will increasingly tune politics out. Over time their memory of—and sense of entitlement to—a better life will give way, and they will docilely submit to authorities whose power will only increase as the crisis deepens. Or the country's appalling conditions might stir a domestic revolution, a fourth *chimurenga*, which will bring down Mugabe and his ruling party.

The stakes are not small. Mugabe is one of the last surviving members of a club of African big men—a club that included the likes of Mobutu Sese Seko, of Zaire, and Daniel Arap Moi, of Kenya. These men led necessary and bold opposition to colonial rule, but then grew addicted to power and its opulent trappings. They began to see themselves less as rulers of their lands than as owners. As their support waned, the big men acted in ways that big men so often do, following a manual very much like Mugabe's—profiteering, stealing elections, torturing opponents, alienating professionals and foreigners, and ignoring the needs of their impoverished citizens.

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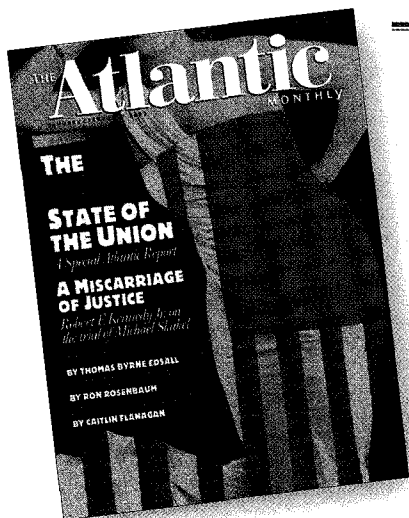
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cause the country has come apart at such a frighteningly brisk pace, one can see the continent's worst tendencies in microcosm. The lessons are clear. First, the contemporary skeptics of democracy—who argue that it enables tyrannies of the majority and that it ranks lower in priority than economic development—miss the central insight of the Zimbabwe experience: When a ruler operates without con-

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so that the earth we broke  
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The rock we place on top,  
common glacial granite,  
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his way back up and out,  
gasping, salted with dirt,  
and barks his familiar bark  
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a Pavlovian response,  
and stumble half awake  
downstairs to turn the knob  
where something, some mortal stub

I swear I recognize,  
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swims out of nothingness  
and brushes past me  
into its rightful house.

—MAXINE KUMIN

*Maxine Kumin's most recent volumes of poetry are  
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straint, he can institute a tyranny of the minority, and he can plunder his country's economy and starve his people without any potential corrective. Democratic accountability is the bedrock concept that no developed or developing state can live without. An outspoken press, a healthy opposition, periodic elections, and an independent judiciary are rightly valued for themselves, but their greatest virtue is practical: they deter and thwart top-down demolition. Second, however distant the days of imperial rule or Cold War interventions in Africa, the residual resentments are a huge psychological impediment to sensible action by African leaders. In many instances these leaders are simply deflecting attention from their own failings. But anti-colonial rants get a receptive hearing among ordinary citizens, because Western leaders have rarely acknowledged their past sins and still refuse to face up to the way the West's farm subsidies are ravaging African agriculture. Thus when things go wrong, it remains expedient—and easy—to blame the white man. Third, regardless of the measure of Western responsibility for Africa's mess, it is clear that the future of Africa lies in the hands of African leaders. Thus far, individually and collectively, they have been more prone to hide behind the past than to take responsibility for the present. If Zimbabwe is a test of South Africa's capacity to lead an African renaissance, then South Africa has flunked that test.

Finally, Zimbabwe shows just how hard it is to destroy a place completely. Mugabe has done virtually everything conceivable to ruin his country, but one finds signs of a redoubtable spirit everywhere. Graffiti has sprung up at city bus stops, reading, "*Zvakwana!*," or "It's enough!" Despite arrest and torture, opposition activists remain brazen in their dissent. Displaced farm workers now survive by growing vegetables in grass patches beside bus stops. The destitute wait patiently in line to cast ballots in elections they know will be stolen. White farmers spend what's left of their savings suing for the return of their land in courts presided over by a government whose officials occupy their farmhouses. All say the same thing: Yes, Zimbabwe has been the continent's latest example of how not to govern. But the mounting severity of Mugabe's crackdown is a testament to his frustration with the resilience of civil society, which simply refuses to go away. If Mugabe were to give up power, Zimbabweans insist, the country would quickly show how liberated citizens can mend a shattered land. The effect, they say, could be contagious.

For all their differences, Mugabe and Ian Smith share a basic misconception about power: they both fail to realize that a government cannot survive indefinitely when it advances the political and economic desires of the few at the expense of the many. When I asked Smith whether he would stop leaving his front door open now that starving Zimbabweans are prowling the city, he replied, "I'm not going to change now." The same, alas, is most likely true of Robert Mugabe. ▀



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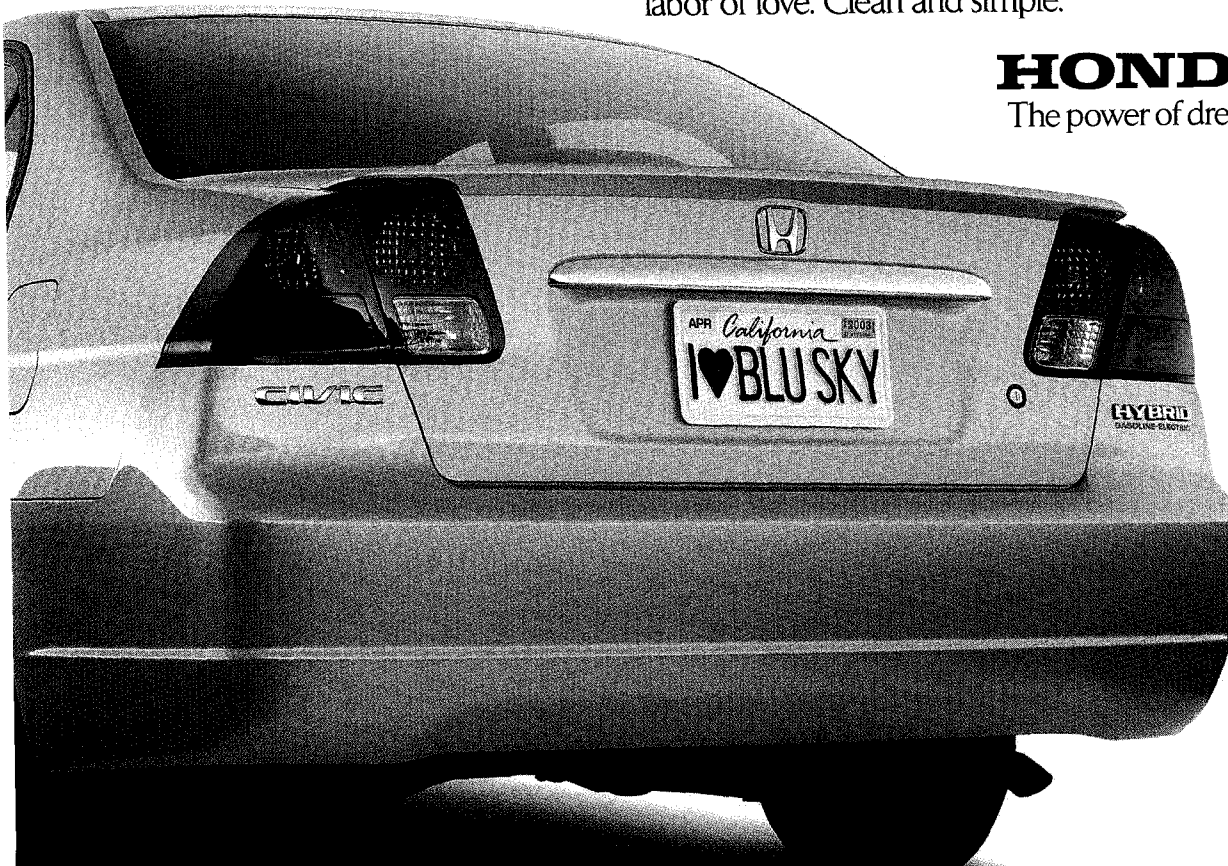
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# SCRUTINY ON THE *BOUNTY*:

## CAPTAIN BLIGH'S SECRET LOGBOOK

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

.....

"No monster on the high seas has equaled the infamous ship captain William Bligh. And no movie fan can forget the scene in which Charles Laughton, the definitive Bligh in the 1935 film, instructs his crew to keep flogging a man. That he's dead makes no difference to Bligh, lips curled with unfettered malignancy.

"Everything you think you know about Bligh is utterly wrong," says best-selling writer Caroline Alexander ..."

—*USA Today*

**February 2, 1789.** Position 18°52'3" S, 129°27'45" W. Winds light, W by WSW. Seas 2–4 feet. Am much vexed on account of Mr. Christian. His mood-compass vacillates sharply between Hysterical Agitation and Sullen Lethargy. I had so wanted this Voyage to be special for him.

Last night upon seeing him brooding, I told him I would stand his Watch and to go below and curl up in his bunke with a saucy book and a tot of grog. Whereupon he expostulated at me with such Violence that all I could do was mutter, "I keenly regret that you should feel so, dear man," and retreat to my own cabin.

Calmed myself by re-drawing the Admiralty charts of the North and South Atlantick, which I found to be rife with Errors.

**Febr. 10.** Upon examining the Log, I found that Fletcher, who of late hath taken to addressing me as "Captain Bilge," had put us on a course not for Otaheite but for the Greate Barrier Reeve—named by myself on my Voyage with the late Captain Cook, God rest his fine soul.

Not wanting to embarrass him in front of the other Officers, I quietly ordered the helm up 2 ½ points. Whereupon he appeared on the quarterdeck, wearing no Breeches but only a nightshirt and a most fierce look in his eyes, and proceeded to accost me in a manner alarming and disrespectful, calling me Names which Decency prevents me from here enumerating.

I could only reply abashedly, "But your course, good man, though indubitably well intentioned, would have set us upon Sharke Rocks!"

*Christopher Buckley is the author of Washington Schlepped Here (2003) and nine other books. His short story "We Have a Pope!" appeared in the April 2003 Atlantic.*

But he would hear none of it, and called *me* the sharke.

"Fletcher, Fletcher, Fletcher," I said to him with a soothing aspect, "pray lie down, and I shall send Surgeon to bleed you of this unbecoming Humour."

Thereat he threw his grog cup at my feet and stormed off, beating an angry *quadrille* with his boot-heels upon the deck.

To the men looking on this unfortunate incident I said, "Mr. Christian is not himself, but he is a fine officer and will be well soon. Now look lively, lads, and spruce the t'upper-gallants! Lively, now! Strike the foresnocker and slack the trice-halyards! Look sharp, my chickens! We shall have a tasty surprise at supper—I have ordered a well-drenched rumcake, and after, we shall dance a jig or two!"

**March 3.** Otaheite. At anchor. The putting aboard of the Bread-fruit proceeds. It is good to see the men so happy. The Native girls are exceeding generous with their charms.

**March 15.** Otaheite. Cross with myself over incident last night. Returned to the ship after surveying the island for the Admiralty, to find Fletcher in mine own berth making exceeding merry with three Native Dollies, one of whom, a girl not twelve years of age, is the daughter of the High Priest Mahoota-ete, upon whose Good Will the success of our mission very much depends.

This rude surprise, coupled with an fierce Migraine, the result of a Malaria contracted whilst ashore harvesting Bread-fruit, the men being too occupied with fornicating to assist me, put me in no good temper, which I thereupon proceeded to lose.

I abused Fletcher most severely, calling him a "randy ram" and "disgraceful" and "unprofessional." It is with Mortification that I recall my speech. Fortunately, my expostulations went unheard, as he had passed out, either from Surfeit of Eros or my (rather good) '78 Madeira.

**At anchor.** This morning's muster attended only by the cabin boy, Tom, three men of the larboard watch, two of the starboard, the carpenter, and the ship's Parrot, Algernon, the rest of the crew being still ashore in pursuit of Venery.

Have resolved to sail upon the morning tide and commence our historick voyage to His Majesty's slave plantations in Guyana with our cargoe of nutritious high-fiber Bread-fruit. (Reminder to self upon return to England to mount a Campaign for the Abolition of Slavery, a most unnatural and abhorrent practice.)

The sooner we are under the discipline of the sea, the better.

**April 21.** At sea—finally! Men *very* sullen at having left their Toffee-darlings behind and glower at me if I so





much as suggest—for I no longer bother ordering them—that they might attend to the sails.

At 7 bells espied a dark Squall approaching from SW. “Up, lads!” I called out. “Up my darlings, briskly, and douse the mid-foremizzen and furl the afterwanker, or we shall lose them!”

But Fletcher and the other Officers and both Watches said they could not be bothered, inasmuch as they were occupied tattooing the names of their Otaheite Dianas on each other’s chests. Had to attend to the sails myself, with only Tom to assist me, who, being dim, is not much use aloft.

If this impertinence persists, I shall have no recourse but to write a Letter of Rebuke in their Finesse reports upon our return to England.

**Apr. 24.** Found another Native wench stowed away. Most tiresome—the fourth so far. This one they were keeping in the larboard line locker, which no doubt accounteth for the great amount of volunteering of late to fetch unneeded halyards, sheets, stays, ratlines, Etc. Gave the men a good lashing with my Tongue and threatened to cancel Friday Night Whist if I found any more Tartes in my line lockers.

**Apr. 26.** Awoke at 6 bells to a Commotion on deck. Found the men inebriated on taro-root beer and pelting each other with our precious Bread-fruits. To my dismay, the Officers—garishly tattooed with the most Appalling and Lewd sentiments—were taking part in this Botanicide.

I had no choice but to lash them all vigorously with my Tongue. Then ordered half grog rations until Supper. Set the Officers to conjugate Irregular Latin verbs in chalk upon their navigation slates, occasioning much grumbling.

**Apr. 27.** Feeling confident that Order and good Naval discipline has been restored. The men go about their business, playing Bezique and Ten-o-Whiskers, napping and smoking and fishing and holding Spitting contests.

**Apr. 28.** Wanting to reward this good Behaviour, at 7 bells I announced that we would heave to—which maneuver I of course offered to undertake myself—in order that we might have a nice refreshing swim before our noon-meal of Dolphin and Sharke ceviche in a lyme-cilantro Reduction with julienned mangoes and mashed wasabi taro. (My own Recipe.)

But instead of leading the men in a chorus of “Huzzah for our Captain Bligh!” Mr. Christian became Ballistick, hopping up and down like a French who has just been denied a third helping of *foie gras pâté*. Whereat the amok Ajax unsheathed his boarding-sword and began screeching at me, “I am in hell! In hell, sir!”

I replied, with such composure as I was able to muster, “Well, I am most grieved to hear it, *sir*,” putting an hundred-weight of pig-iron into the terminal word. “But perhaps a nice swim *would* cool you off.”

Whereatupon he renewed his Remonstrations, bellowing at me a litany of complaints: —my “insensitivity” in having rebuked the men for spreading the French Pox among the Otaheite Innocents; —making them eat Sour Kraute against the Scurvy; —making them dance at night to circulate the Blood; —sending them aloft in high winds to take in Sail; —making them attend prayer-service upon the Sabbath; —my “obsession” with keeping the decks clean, Etc, Etc. Moses at his Expostulations before Pharaoh was less strident.

“Enow!” I finally cried. “I have heard quite *enow*, Mister Christian! And now if you will be so kind as to order the boat lowered, and to provide me with a crust of bread and a cask of fresh water, a melon or two if you can spare them from your *food-fighting*, my quadrant and chartes, I shall no longer trouble you with my presence aboard this vessel, *sir*. For it is my plain, humble, and franke conclusion that you have Issues with Male Authority, and into the bargain are disposed to violent Humours, careening from Phlegm to Bile in the space of time it takes to furl the midspizzlejidget. So with no further Adieu, I wish you, sir, and your men—for so they now are, along with the Bread-fruit—a good *day*!”

A number of men expressed desire to accompany me in the Boat. Was most Touched.

**June 12.** Batavia. During our 48-day Voyage, amidst disagreeable conditions, I was able to Process my feelings toward Fletcher, assuaged by the diversion of charting the coast of New Holland (rather accurately), also with keeping my lads alive, by means of such loathsome victuals as we were able to procure—gull-feet, barnacles, jellyfish, booby eggs, sea-weedes, Etc. By the time we fetched Timor, I had exhausted my anger at him and was resolved to say nothing against him in the event of an Inquest, having no wish to put at risk his future in H. M. Navy. He is a decent fellow at heart and will make a fine Officer of the Line, if only he would purge himself of these Demons that afflict him.

Do earnestly hope he delivered my Bread-fruit safely to West Indies.

Must go and make a Poultice for my men. ▀



# CHILDLIGHT

.....

## CHILDREN, SINGING

It's the time of year when listening to a child

Becomes a way to pray.

Praise newborn God, we think, all *mercy mild*,

And may He gain our day.

Before us here a choir of heavenish voices,

Children's voices, say,

As the anthem demands, *Our weary world rejoices*.

But just what are we to pray?

That we *become*—as writings prophesy—

*As little children?* That we *hark*—

Hearing the carol—as *the herald angels sing?* They'll fly

Breakneck from innocence to dark-

Tinged wonder, Incarnation flown to Passion.

But singing children—They,

Like Bethlehem's Infant, salve such apprehension.

From the manger *where He lay*,

The center of a universe now blessed,

A childlight charges every note and rest.

—SYDNEY LEA

## HAILSTORM

Like a storm  
of hornets, the  
little white planets  
layer and relayer  
as they whip around  
in their high orbits,  
getting more and  
more dense before  
they crash against  
our crust. A maelstrom  
of ferocious little  
fists and punches,  
so hard to believe  
once it's past.

—KAY RYAN

## MUNICIPAL PLAYGROUND

The shockingly green, gold, and red beetle—  
too petite for a June bug, with greater iridescence  
and a delicacy of limb and feeler

unprecedented in the insect kingdom—

walks up her palm to the inside of her wrist.

"I must show this bug to that boy,"

she says of a sulking pre-adolescent

I've peripherally watched abuse

the for-toddlers-only rocking horses

on their rusty springs.

He is the wrong boy.

The beetle, sensing danger, flies off

before I have to make excuses

for the boy's inevitably sour

or mocking or violent response.

Yes, the beetle flies away,

probably wanting his mom to make him lunch,

we decide, heading for the car,

but the boy has noticed her glances,

her interest, watches her with a malevolence

I hope I'm imagining. He waits,

and will be there again tomorrow

or next week, and she will approach

with her wistful only-child smile,

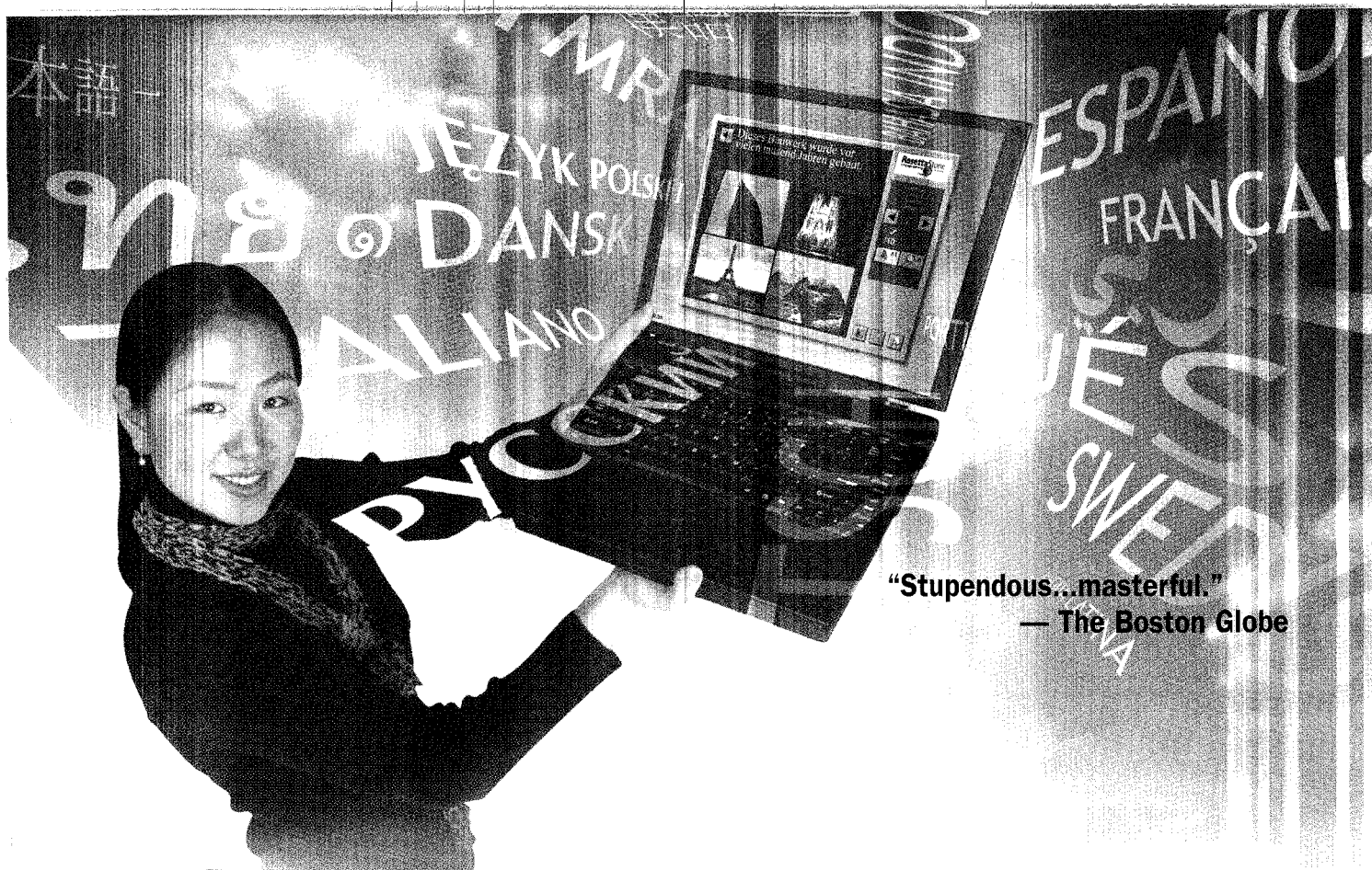
her delighting eyes,

to show him something else.

—J. ALLYN ROSSER

*Sydney Lea's books include Pursuit of a Wound (2000) and To the Bone: New and Selected Poems (1996), a co-winner of the Poets' Prize. Lea lives in Vermont. J. Allyn Rosser's latest collection is Misery Prefigured (2001). Rosser teaches at Ohio University. Kay Ryan, a lifelong Californian, has published five books of poetry, including Say Uncle (2000).*





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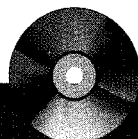
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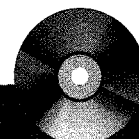
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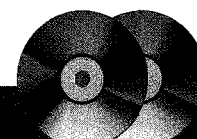
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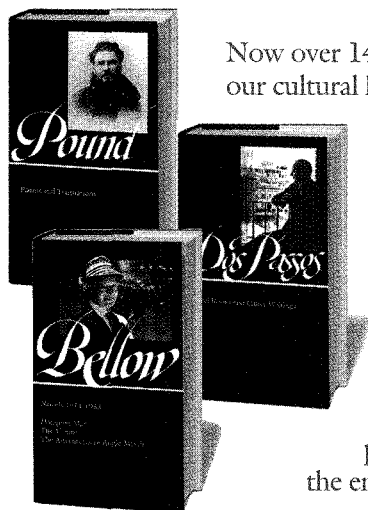


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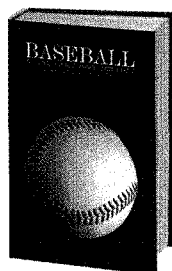


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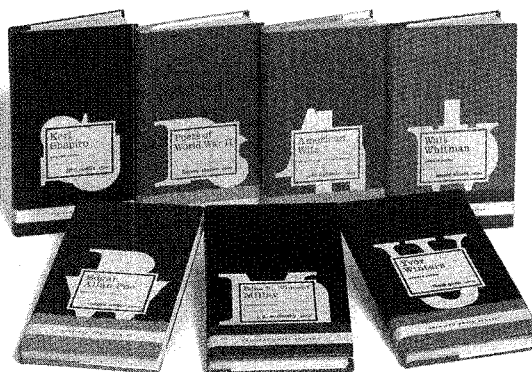
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## BOOKS &amp; CRITICS

## THIS MONTH:

**The Supreme American Novelist**

"The American novel, having become dominant, was in turn dominated by the Jewish-American novel, and everybody knows who dominated that." Martin Amis assesses Saul Bellow's place in the American pantheon

PAGE 111

**Second Puberty**

"Yeats's life, however elevated the realms in which it unfolded, was nothing if not messy." Christopher Cahill reviews the second volume in R. F. Foster's biography of Yeats

PAGE 116

**Pictures From an Inquisition**

"He was one of those intellectual misfits ... ground to powder between the upper and nether millstones of Stalin and Hitler." Christopher Hitchens on Victor Serge

PAGE 119

**Burgher Deluxe**

Two new books on conspicuous consumption, reviewed by Sandra Tsing Loh

PAGE 126

**This Boy's Lit**

*Old School*, by Tobias Wolff, reviewed by Thomas Mallon

PAGE 128

**On the Road and Off the Wall**

*The Towers of Trebizond*, by Rose Macaulay, reviewed by Brooke Allen

PAGE 130

**Cat Tales**

*Jenny and the Cat Club*, by Esther Averill, reviewed by Christina Schwarz

PAGE 131

**The Lonely Passion**

*The Between Boyfriends Book*, by Cindy Chupack, reviewed by Caitlin Flanagan

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## NEW &amp; NOTEWORTHY

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

In this book you'll find some of the best American prose of the second half of the twentieth century. Many of my fellow forty-and-under readers don't know Talese's work at all (or have only the vaguest, and smuttiest, notion of him as the author of *Thy Neighbor's Wife*, his intricate, disturbing, and best-selling 1980 exploration of the effects of the sexual revolution—in which, admittedly, he extended the role of participant-observer a bit too far). But *The Kingdom and the Power*, his at once fat and precise "human history" of *The New York Times* (where he was a reporter for twelve years), remains the most astute assessment of that most august institution and its place in American life; and *Honor Thy Father*, his intimate portrait of the Bonanno family, was the first sympathetic, insider examination of family life within the Mafia. Still, Talese's premier contribution to American letters is his astonishing magazine articles, largely profiles written for *Esquire* in the mid-1960s, which are gathered in this recently published but unheralded volume. Talese and Tom Wolfe are the great pioneers of New Journalism, but although the style, approach, and structure of Talese's pieces was radical, his superlatively smooth writing had none of Wolfe's attention-grabbing swagger, and it perfectly suited his role as invisible observer. The subjects of his articles here range from boxers—Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Floyd Patterson (Talese, who wrote thirty-eight articles on Patterson, said he became the fighter's "second skin")—to the editors of *Vogue* ("a group of suave and wrinkle-proof women, who ... can speak in italics and curse in French"), to the tortured, winsome, and usually inebriated Peter O'Toole, to Manhattan's stray cats (of which he wrote tenderly yet not sentimentally, as he did of boxers). But indisputably the towering works in the book are his portraits of Frank Sinatra ("Frank Sinatra Has a Cold," 1966) and Joe DiMaggio ("The Silent Season of a Hero," 1966), which are certainly among the very best articles ever published in an American magazine. The genesis of the Sinatra profile is legendary: *Esquire* flew Talese to Los Angeles to interview the singer, who—having a cold and being otherwise moody and indisposed—canceled the interview. Rather than scrapping the story, Talese practiced what he calls the "fine art of hanging out"—talking with the members of Sinatra's entourage and standing at the



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periphery of the action as Sinatra awed, cowed, and beguiled his circle and those outside it. Talese never spoke to Sinatra, but this endures as the definitive portrait: We see Sinatra as brutal and generous, charming and bullying, lonely and removed. Talese revealed how these discrete and contradictory qualities shaded into one another, and so let readers discern Sinatra as a man, even as he made plain that Sinatra's charisma remained impenetrable. In both this profile and the one of DiMaggio (whom he characterized, spot on, as "a kind of male Garbo"), Talese portrayed his era's masculine ideal as a kind of detached engagement; these pieces are essential to understanding not merely two American icons but the gender relations, family life, popular culture, and political style of the American Century. The best of Talese's journalistic work—including many pieces not reprinted here—was collected in *Fame and Obscurity* (1970), now out of print. If you can't find it at a used-book store or on BookFinder.com, buy this intelligently edited assemblage. Oh—and thanks and congratulations to *Esquire*, which celebrated its seventieth anniversary this past fall.

## LITERARY STUDIES

**THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN**, by Paul Elie (Farrar Straus & Giroux). Interweaving the lives, work, and spiritual struggles of four twentieth-century American Catholic writers—Flannery O'Connor, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, and Walker Percy—Elie probes above all what Percy called their "predicament shared in common": the struggle to reconcile religious faith with the demands of art. Elie, though, is at his most insightful when examining the predicament shared most intensely by O'Connor and Percy (by far the two most accomplished writers in the group, and the authors with whom he's clearly most engaged). "My subject in fiction," O'Connor explained, "is the action of grace in territory held largely by the devil. I have also found that what I write is read by an audience which puts little stock either in grace or the devil." (As Percy said of O'Connor, she "saw

the enemy clearly, namely a certain sort of triumphant humanist.") This book (which was published earlier in the year, and takes its title from that of an O'Connor story) is difficult to characterize, because it's almost impossibly rich. Elie keenly anatomizes religious experience and expression and the often agonizing pilgrimages that defined his subjects' lives (his portrait of the holy sinner Day's progress from despairing libertine to probable saint is especially vivid and affecting). He is a gifted critic (particularly in his assessment of O'Connor's fierce art, and of her position in the southern literary tradition). He is a sensitive historian as he places these writers' lives and art in the context of an evolving Catholicism and the social, cultural, and political developments of their times—and as he reveals the often subtle connections among these rather disparate figures (they read one another's work and corresponded, but some of them never met; their common confidante, Caroline Gordon, dubbed them "the School of the Holy Ghost"). This is the sort of ambitious marriage of criticism, biography, and history of which Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* and *To the Finland Station* are the superlative examples. Elie's book can't match the sweep and austere authority of Wilson's masterpieces, but it's an exceptionally intelligent and often elegant work, and Elie should be applauded for the reach—and grasp—of his literary ambition.

**BRICK LANE**, by Monica Ali (Scribner). Like Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, Ali's debut novel is set in multicultural London; but unlike Smith's antic, sprawling vision, Ali's is cool, confined, and unsparing. Meticulously following the circumscribed life of Nazneen, a sheltered, devoutly Muslim, married Bangladeshi garment worker, the novel depicts her experience through her own constricted and, to the reader, alien point of view. (Ali practices the self-effacement of the supremely confident writer as she subordinates her style to her protagonist's perspective.) This permits Ali to bring to a tale of marriage, desire, and adultery the same gravity and sense of imperilment that similar situations en-



gendered in the great nineteenth-century novels. With measured assurance Ali summons the grinding claustrophobia of Nazneen's daily life, the loneliness of her marriage, her almost willful passivity—and the emotional chaos of her erotic awakening, which carries with it the danger not merely of social ostracism but quite literally of damnation. But this is also a novel about the progress of a marriage (which evolves simultaneously with Nazneen's knowledge of English and her concomitant self-knowledge). Nazneen's older, pudgy husband is one of Ali's many triumphs: pretentious and ineffectual, gentle and kind, this poignant failure (reminiscent of Naipaul's Mr. Biswas) grows on the reader, just as he grows on Nazneen. Exasperatingly, Ali's complex and largely deterministic story ends with a discordant postscript of mushy self-fulfillment, and the rare cliché and patch of overwrought writing mar her refreshingly restrained, precise prose. But this is a splendid novel and—despite (or, really, because of) its multicultural setting—an old-fashioned one.

**THE CONSTANT CIRCLE: H. L. MENCKEN AND HIS FRIENDS**, by Sara Mayfield (Alabama). For all his swashbuckling assaults on what he called the "booboisie," H. L. Mencken was himself solidly bourgeois. The critic and editor who introduced American readers to Nietzsche and Ibsen and published Ezra Pound had courtly manners and exhibited an almost Victorian sense of decorum toward women. To be sure, he cast a cold eye on every beloved American institution (marriage included), and in his writing he affected a cynical, even amoral, world view; but as George Jean Nathan noted, Mencken spent "considerable time each year in toy stores picking out doll babies and choo-choo cars for the youngsters of his married acquaintances." And although he regularly caroused with Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, self-destructive alcoholics who wrote in fits and starts and kept most irregular hours, Mencken—who when in New York preferred the sauerbraten and pilsner at Lüchow's, on Fourteenth Street, to what he called the "glittering swinishness" of midtown—embraced

the work ethic and daily routine of a Baltimore burgher. He even lived with his mother until her death—and then married, at age fifty. No portrait better captures this upright, domestic side of Mencken than Mayfield's. An Alabama belle, Mayfield grew up in Montgomery with Tallulah Bankhead, Zelda Sayre (later Fitzgerald), and Sara Haardt, Mencken's future wife. Mayfield and Mencken shared an intense devotion to the demure, doomed Haardt (she died of tuberculosis after five years of marriage), and Mencken seemed at ease revealing aspects of his personality to her that he held in check with other members of the literati. From their tender friendship (which, coincidentally, reminds me of the bond between the friend and the wife of the stricken short-story writer in Fitzgerald's "The Lees of Happiness") emerged this sympathetic, quietly penetrating reminiscence-cum-biography. First published in 1968, it's now back in print.

Although impressionistic and—as Edmund Wilson's review of it (reprinted here as an introduction) attests—not always accurate, Mayfield's book remains a thoroughly satisfying and humane depiction of the figure Walter Lippmann characterized in 1926 as "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people."

## HISTORY

**THEOLOGY IN AMERICA**, by E. Brooks Holifield (Yale). An astonishing number of the most important and creative works of American history written in the past twenty-five years examine Christianity—including Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*, Nathan O. Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, and George M. Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. But these books

# Books of the Year

SUGGESTIONS FOR GIVING AND GETTING

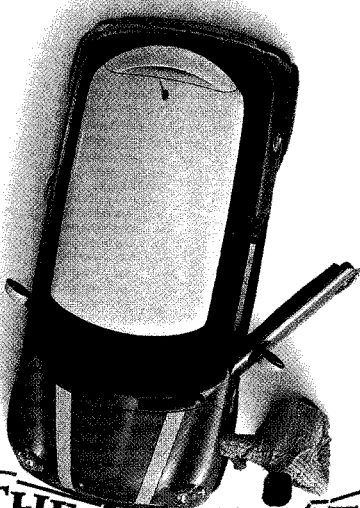
- BRICK LANE: A Novel**  
by Monica Ali (Scribner)
- ANY HUMAN HEART: A Novel**  
by William Boyd (Knopf)
- THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN:**  
An American Pilgrimage  
by Paul Elie (Farrar Straus & Giroux)
- MARIANNE IN CHAINS: Daily Life in the Heart of France During the German Occupation**  
by Robert Gildea (Metropolitan Books)
- THE GREAT FIRE: A Novel**  
by Shirley Hazzard (Farrar Straus & Giroux)
- THE KNOWN WORLD: A Novel**  
by Edward P. Jones (Amistad)
- TRANSFORMATIONS OF LOVE: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Goldophin**  
by Francis Harris (Oxford)
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primarily explore the sociological facets of religion; with the exception of Mark A. Noll, the author of *America's God*, historians have mostly shied away from writing grand, synthetic books on American theological history. This is somewhat surprising, because for more than 200 years study of and debate about Christian doctrine lay at the very center of American intellectual life. Whereas today the country's best and brightest work in investment banks or write TV sitcoms, from the seventeenth century to the Civil War, America's finest minds were overwhelmingly drawn to theology or politics. With Holifield's magisterial survey of American theology from the 1630s to the 1860s we finally have an authoritative study of this central preoccupation. Although *Theology in America* and *America's God* examine the same subject, Holifield's book is more comprehensive and less broadly interpretive than Noll's (which focuses on the relationship between evangelicalism and republican political ideology). Holifield, a historian at Emory, commandingly elucidates the theological conversation across time among such divines as Cotton Mather, Horace Bushnell, and James Henley Thornwell; he illuminates the intricacies of New England Calvinism, Presbyterian New School thought, and Transcendentalism (among many other creeds); he explicates the evolution of the major denominations; and he assesses how theological debate affected religious practice. Throughout he stresses the deep and ongoing European influence on American theologians (a key theme in Noll's book as well) and the intense efforts among theologians of nearly every denomination to defend the reasonableness of their faith. (One has a sense that from essentially the very beginning of American history Christian thinkers were fighting an increasingly desperate intellectual struggle against rationalism, even as they attempted to assimilate rationalism and use it in their defense.) Although there's no escaping the fact that the disputes and developments he analyzes range from the complex to the arcane, this will remain for at least a generation the definitive chronicle of an essential

aspect of American religious and intellectual history. Holifield's work caps an *annus mirabilis* for books on the history of Christianity in America (see "Books of the Year," page 109).

## ARCHITECTURE

**CHICAGO'S FAMOUS BUILDINGS, FIFTH EDITION**, by Franz Schulze and Kevin Harrington (Chicago). Ratifying the obvious, the American Institute of Architects recently named Chicago the city with the finest architecture in the country, and this book, recently published in a fully revised and expanded fifth edition, has long been the standard guide to the city's most distinguished buildings. In fact the AIA's own guide, now out of print, was a far more detailed and inclusive one-volume handbook, but its straightforward descriptions read as though they'd been drafted by committee. It lacked the personality (and portability) of this handbook, which has been substantially different in each edition, owing to the taste and proclivities of its changing editors and to the evolution of architectural fashion. (The first two editions, for instance, focused heavily on the city's canonical Chicago and Prairie School buildings; the third edition, in 1980, considered many more modernist buildings, and the inclusive emphasis of it and the fourth edition, published in 1993, reflected the post-modernist aesthetic then in vogue.) The current editors—who, in a departure from earlier editions, also wrote all the entries—have continued the previous two editions' practice of describing and assessing the architectural character of neighborhoods, not just single buildings, which renders their examinations of "Chicago's famous buildings" in this already very general guide sometimes too general. And, inescapably, one quibbles with some of the emphases and selections. But Schulze and Harrington are unusually brisk, even saucy, writers, and their descriptions are commendably concrete and vivid. This is an admirable reworking of a book that's at once a classic and a work in progress. **A**

*Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.*





BOOKS

## THE SUPREME AMERICAN NOVELIST

*A tribute to Saul Bellow, fifty years after he published one of the great novels of all time*

BY MARTIN AMIS

.....

Whereas English poetry “fears no one,” E. M. Forster wrote in 1927, English fiction “is less triumphant”: there remained the little matter of the Russians and the French. Forster published his last novel, *A Passage to India*, in 1924, but he lived on until 1970—long enough to witness a profound rearrangement in the balance of power. Russian fiction, as dementedly robust as ever in the early years of the century (Bulgakov, Zamyatin, Bely, Bunin), had been wiped off the face of the earth; French fiction seemed to have strayed into philosophical and essayistic peripheries; and English fiction (which still awaited the crucial infusion from

the “colonials”) felt, well, hopelessly English—hopelessly inert and inbred. Meanwhile, and as if in obedience to the political reality, American fiction was assuming its manifest destiny.

**SAUL BELLOW**  
Novels 1944–1953  
edited by James Wood  
Library of America

**THE ADVENTURES  
OF AUGIE MARCH**  
50th Anniversary Edition  
by Saul Bellow  
Viking

The American novel, having become dominant, was in turn dominated by the Jewish-American novel, and everybody knows who dominated that: Saul Bellow. His was and is a pre-eminence that rests not on sales figures and honorary degrees, not on rosettes and sashes, but on incontestable legitimacy. To hold otherwise is to waste your breath. Bellow sees more than we see—sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches. Compared with him, the rest of us are

only fitfully sentient; and intellectually, too, his sentences simply *weigh* more than anybody else’s. John Updike and Philip Roth, the two writers in perhaps the strongest position to rival Bellow, or to succeed him, have both acknowledged that his seniority is not merely a question of Anno Domini. Egomania is an ingredient of literary talent, and a burdensome one: the egomaniacal reverie is not, as many suppose, a stupor of self-satisfaction; it is more like a state of red alert. Yet writers are surprisingly realistic about hierarchy. John Berryman claimed that he was “comfortable” playing second fiddle to Robert Lowell; and when that old flagship Robert Frost sank to the bottom, in 1963, he said impulsively (and unsentimentally), “It’s scary. Who’s number one?” But that was just a rush of blood. Berryman knew his proper place.

Rather impertinently, perhaps, you could summarize the preoccupations of the Jewish-American novel in one word: “shiksas” (literally, “detested things”). It transpired that there was something uniquely riveting about the conflict



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between the Jewish sensibility and the temptations—the inevitabilities—of materialist America. As one Bellow narrator puts it, “At home, inside the house, an archaic rule; outside, the facts of life.” The archaic rule is somber, blood-bound, guilt-torn, renunciatory, and transcendental; the facts of life are atomized, unreflecting, and unclean. Of course, the Jewish-American novel subsumes the experience of the immigrant, with an “old country” at one remove; and the emphasis is on the anxiety of entitlement (marked in Roth, too, and in Malamud). It is not an anxiety about succeeding, about making good; it is an anxiety about the right to pronounce, the right to judge—about the right to write. And the consequence would seem to be that these novelists brought a new intensity to the act of authorial commitment, offering up the self entire, holding nothing back. Although Jewish-American fiction is often comic and deflationary, concerning itself with what *Herzog* (1964) called “high-minded mistakes,” something world-historically dismal lies behind it—a terminal standard of human brutality. The dimensions of this brutality were barely graspable in 1944, the year that saw the beginning of Bellow’s serial epic. And America would subsequently be seen as “the land of historical redress,” a place where (as Bellow wrote with cold simplicity) “the Jews could not be put to death.”

Universalizingly, the Jewish-American novel poses a mind-body problem—and then goes ahead and solves it on the page. “When some new thought gripped his heart he went to the kitchen, his headquarters, to write it down,” Bellow writes on page one of *Herzog*. “When some new thought gripped his heart”: the voice is undisassociated; it responds to the world with passionate sensuality, and at a pitch of cerebration no less prodigious and unflagging. Bellow has presided over an efflorescence that clearly owes much to historical circumstances, and we must now elegiacally conclude that the phase is coming to an end. No replacements stand in line. Did “assimilation” do it, or was the process something flabbier and more diffuse? “Your history, too, became one



of your options,” the narrator of *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989) notes dryly. “Whether or not having a history was a ‘consideration’ was entirely up to you.” Recalling Philip Rahv’s famous essay of 1939, we may say that the Palefaces have prevailed over the Redskins. Roth will maintain the tradition, for a while. Yet he is Uncas—last of the Mohicans.

Praise and dispraise play their part in the quality control of literary journalism, but when the value judgment is applied to the past its essential irrationality is sharply exposed. The practice of rearranging the canon on aesthetic or moralistic grounds (today such grounds would be political—that is, egalitarian) was unanswerably ridiculed by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). To imagine a literary “stock exchange”

marriage with their readers, and in this respect James’s fiction follows a peculiar arc: courtship, honeymoon, vigorous cohabitation, and then growing disaffection and estrangement; separate beds, and then separate rooms. As with any marriage, the relationship is measured by the quality of its daily intercourse—by the quality of its language. And even at its most equable and beguiling (the androgynous delicacy, the wonderfully alien eye), James’s prose suffers from an acute behavioral flaw. Students of usage have identified the habit as “elegant variation.” The phrase is intended ironically, because the elegance aspired to is really pseudo-elegance, anti-elegance. For example: “She proceeded to the left, towards the Ponte Vecchio, and stopped in front of one of the hotels which overlook that de-

**Saul Bellow’s pre-eminence rests not on sales figures and honorary degrees, not on rosettes and sashes, but on incontestable legitimacy. Compared with him, the rest of us are only fitfully sentient.**

in which reputations “boom and crash,” he argued, is to reduce literary criticism to the sphere of “leisure-class gossip.” You can go on about it, you can labor the point, but you cannot demonstrate that Milton is a better poet than Macaulay—or, indeed, that Milton is a better poet than McConagall. It is evident, it is obvious, but it cannot be proved. Still, I propose to make an educated guess about literary futures, and I hereby trumpet the prediction that Saul Bellow will emerge as the supreme American novelist. There is, hereabouts, no shortage of narrative genius, and it tends, as Bellow tends, toward the visionary—a quality needed for the interpretation of a New World. But when we look to the verbal surface, to the instrument, to the prose, Bellow is *sui generis*. What should he fear? The melodramatic formularies of Hawthorne? The multitudinous facetiousness of Melville? The murkily iterative menace of Faulkner? No. The only American who gives Bellow any serious trouble is Henry James.

All writers enter into an unconscious

lightful structure.” I can think of another variation on the Ponte Vecchio: how about that vulgar little pronoun “it”? Similarly, “breakfast,” later in its appointed sentence, becomes “this repast,” and “tea-pot” becomes “this receptacle”; “Lord Warburton” becomes “that nobleman” (or “the master of Lockleigh”); “letters” become “epistles”; “his arms” become “these members”; and so on. Apart from causing the reader to groan out loud as often as three times in a single sentence, James’s variations suggest broader deficiencies: gentility, fastidiousness, and a lack of warmth, a lack of candor and engagement. All the instances quoted above come from *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), from the generous and hospitable early-middle period. When we enter the arctic labyrinth known as Late James, the retreat from the reader, the embrace of introversion, is as emphatic as that of Joyce, and far more fiendishly prolonged.

The phantom marriage with the reader is the basis of the novelist’s creative equilibrium. Such a relationship

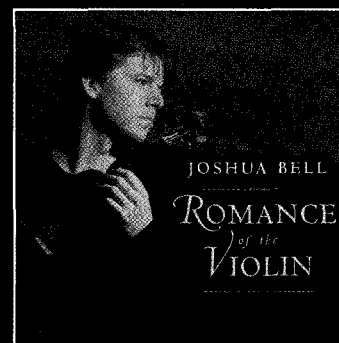
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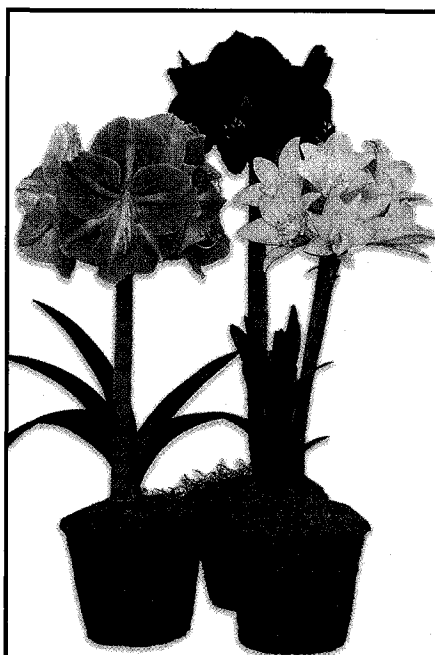
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needs to be unconscious, silent, tacit; and, naturally, it needs to be informed by love. Saul Bellow's love for the reader has always been at once safely subliminal and thrillingly ardent. And it combines with another kind of love, to produce what may be the Bellovian quiddity. Looking again at the late short story "By the St. Lawrence," I found I had marked a passage and written in the margin, "So is this it?" The passage runs,

She was not a lovable woman, but the boy loved her and she was aware of it. He loved them all. He even loved Albert. When he visited Lachine he shared Albert's bed, and in the morning he would sometimes stroke Albert's head, and not even when Albert fiercely threw off his hand did he stop loving him. The hair grew in close rows, row after row.

These observations, Rexler was to learn, were his whole life—his being—and love was what produced them. For each physical trait there was a corresponding feeling. Paired, pair by pair, they walked back and forth, in and out of his soul.

This is it, I think. Love is celebrated for, among other things, its transformative powers; and it is with love, in concert with his overpowering need to commemorate and preserve ("I am the nemesis of the would-be forgotten"), that Bellow transforms the world:

Napoleon Street, rotten, toylike, crazy and filthy, riddled, flogged with harsh weather—the bootlegger's boys reciting ancient prayers. To this Moses' heart was attached with great power. Here was a wider range of human feelings than he had ever again been able to find. The children of the race, by a never-failing miracle, opened their eyes on one strange world after another, age after age, and uttered the same prayer in each, eagerly loving what they found. What was wrong with Napoleon Street? thought Herzog. All he ever wanted was there.

"I am an American, Chicago born," Augie March says, at the outset. It could have gone "I am a Russian, Quebec born—and moved to Chicago at the age of nine." And Bellow *is* a Russian, a Tolstoy, in his purity and amplitude. Which brings us to another ghost from Saint Petersburg: Vladimir Nabokov.

An earnest admirer of *Prin* and *Lolita*, Bellow has nonetheless always felt that Nabokov was artistically weakened by patricianism (the Jamesian flaw); and it is patricianism, certainly, that distances us from the magnum opus, *Invitation to a Beheading*, in which the bond with the reader simply disappears. Nabokov was not an immigrant ("Don't carry on like a goddamn immigrant," Herzog's older brother says as they bury their father): Nabokov remained an émigré. He couldn't become an American; he was—however delightfully—slumming it over there. Bellow as a child, to his immense advantage, knew what slums really were: they presented the widest range of human feelings, but also directed the gaze upward, to the transcendent.

Some years ago I had a curious conversation with a notably prolific novelist who had just finished rereading *The Adventures of Augie March*. We talked about the book; then he thought he was changing the subject when he said, "I went into my study today—and there was nothing. Not a phrase, not a word. I thought, 'It's all gone.'" I said, "Don't worry, it's not you. It's *Augie March*." Because the same thing had happened to me. That's what Bellow can do to you, with his burning, streaming prose: he can make you feel that all the phrases, all the words, are exclusively his. At the same time, we share Augie's utopian elation when, reduced almost to nonentity in Mexico (c. 1940), he glimpses none other than Leon Trotsky.

I believe what it was about him that stirred me up was the instant impression he gave—no matter about the old heap he rode in or the peculiarity of his retinue—of navigation by the great stars, of the highest considerations, of being fit to speak the most important human words and universal terms. When you are as reduced to a different kind of navigation from this high starry kind as I was and are only sculling on the shallow bay, crawling from one clam-rake to the next, it's stirring to have a glimpse of deep-water greatness. And, even more than an established, an exiled greatness, because the exile was a sign to me of persistence at the highest things. ▀

*Martin Amis's latest novel, Yellow Dog, was published last month in the United States.*



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## SECOND PUBERTY

*The later years of W. B. Yeats brought his best poetry,  
along with personal melodrama on an epic scale*

BY CHRISTOPHER CAHILL

.....

In the summer of 1916 William Butler Yeats asked Maud Gonne to marry him. This had become something of a habit over the twenty-seven years since he had first met and fallen in love with her and, as he put it, "the troubling of my life began." From then on he had devoted a considerable part of that life to Maud Gonne and to the idea of Maud Gonne, writing poems and plays inspired by her and by her incomplete refusal of him, trying to rescue her from the mind-boggling series of personal catastrophes that made up her life, communing with her astrally, and even, eventually (a fact that should cheer the hearts of unrequited lovers everywhere), sleeping with her, in Paris, in 1908, "the long years of fidelity," as another of his lovers commented, "rewarded at last." But as Yeats himself said, "the tragedy of sexual intercourse is the perpetual virginity of the soul." By 1916 Yeats was over fifty and wanted to be married and to produce an heir. He knew that Maud, for all the beauty he had once seen in her, or thought he'd seen in her (in photographs she looks like a towering, lantern-jawed man), had gone too far down the road of rabid revolutionary political activism, chloroform addiction, and increasingly Christian mysticism to be anything like a suitable wife. So when he made his request this time, it was really only because he thought he should, because her estranged husband, John MacBride—a drunken gunman, the father of her son, and the molester of her daughter—had recently been executed by the British for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising. Yeats made his proposal in a perfunctory fashion, with conditions attached, expecting and somewhat hoping to be turned down yet again, as he was. As R. F. Foster writes in this much anticipated second and final volume of his biography

of the great Irish poet, occultist, and sucker for romantic punishment, "When he duly asked Maud to marry him, and was duly refused, his thoughts shifted with surprising speed to her daughter."

The sad life of Iseult Gonne is one of the many peripheral stories that Foster expertly sketches in the margins (though she deserves, if that's the word for it, a biography of her own). Twenty-one that summer, Iseult was Maud's second child with Lucien Millevoye, a married French anarchist and newspaperman; she had

been conceived in the mausoleum of her short-lived brother, in an attempt to reincarnate the dead infant. She had been presented to the world as her mother's adopted niece; had been

molested by her stepfather at the age of eleven; had, for her own part, proposed marriage to Yeats when she was fifteen; and now was widely considered a great beauty (a judgment borne out by photographs), although she, like her mother, was something of a giantess. Iseult would go on to be seduced by Ezra Pound, with whom Yeats unwisely secured her a secretarial position; to work with her mother as a gunrunner for the IRA; and to marry the impossibly bad Irish novelist Francis Stuart, a sadist and nincompoop who would eventually leave her, in 1940, to emigrate into Nazi Germany.

In that year of many proposals Iseult, like her mother, turned Yeats down. Determined to marry *someone*, he asked George Hyde-Lees, a twenty-four-year-old woman whom he knew through occult circles. He was accepted (despite the remark made by one of her cousins: "George ... you can't. He must be dead"), was married, and then on their honeymoon found himself down with a bad case of buyer's remorse—feverish, exhausted, and listless with regret. At this point George began to write automati-

cally, taking dictation from celestial "instructors" who appeared like a kick line from the wings to save her marriage even as they provided her husband with the basis for *A Vision*, his endlessly revised mystical opus. Barely a year later Yeats would find himself turning away Maud Gonne (who was disguised as a Red Cross nurse to escape detection by the British authorities) from her own house in Dublin, where he was living with his pregnant bride.

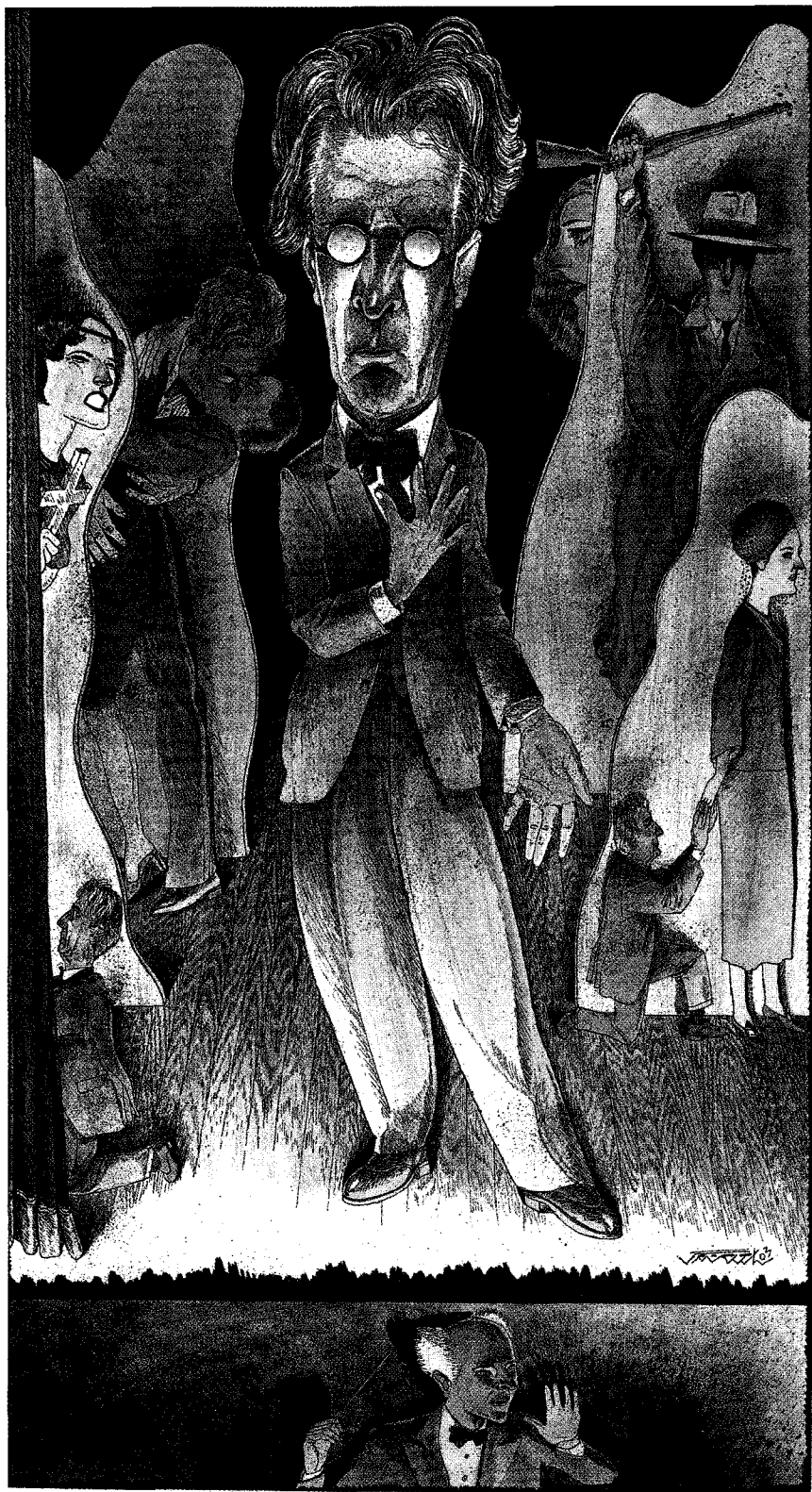
If you think that all this sounds like something out of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, or CBS's *Guiding Light*, you're not alone. The novelist James McCourt once wrote that Yeats, a figure of unmatched imperiousness, "seems to have gone from the inner sanctum of the Order of the Golden Dawn to the board room of the Abbey to Thoor Ballylee to the halls of high deliberation without once having stepped in shit." There's some truth to that. But Foster shows, in this learned and engaging biography, that Yeats's life, however elevated the realms in which it unfolded, was nothing if not messy. Most of the saga related above is contained in the first hundred pages or so of Foster's book—and matters hardly get more sedate or conventional as the story goes on.

Even Yeats's public life was operatic in its incident and intensity of emotions. *The Arch-Poet* begins just at the lead-up to the Easter Rising, the initially unpopular insurrection in Dublin that, though doomed itself, led in surprisingly short order to the partial and then the complete independence from Great Britain of twenty-six counties of Ireland. Yeats was in England during the Rising, which was staged by a small, fanatical offshoot of the Irish Republican Brotherhood—a group he had been involved with in the 1890s. Since then he had shifted toward what is sometimes called, in discussions of the dizzying variety of Irish political positions, constitutional nationalism, as opposed to physical-force nationalism. Yeats wanted an independent Ireland, but he thought that this could be better achieved by pursuing parliamentary action and undertaking nationalist cultural projects—his Abbey Theatre, for instance—than by exploding admin-

W. B. YEATS: A LIFE  
Volume II  
The Arch-Poet  
1915–1939

by R. F. Foster  
Oxford University Press





JACK UNRUH

istrative buildings and murdering policemen. The latter method, however, won out. Foster adeptly charts Yeats's, and Ireland's, changing responses to the "martyrs." This group included a number of people whom Yeats knew personally, notably John MacBride—a man who had once threatened to shoot

him ("the only cheerful piece of news I have had in days," Yeats said at the time; "it gives one a sense of heightened life"). His transformation into an elegist of the martyrs in such poems as "Easter, 1916," "Sixteen Dead Men," and "The Rose Tree" thus has a particular strangeness.

Foster is a historian rather than a literary scholar, and his disentangling of the complicated skein of Irish political and revolutionary activity over the broad period under consideration is one of the book's great strengths. But it is the fantasia of Yeats's personal life, rather than his various performances as a public man, that is most compelling. Toward the end of the biography is an extended episode, straight out of Evelyn Waugh at his cruelest, in which the elderly Yeats, having traveled to Majorca with Shri Purohit Swami (a flatulent Hindu mystic with whom he was "translating" the *Upanishads*) and Lady Gwyneth Foden (a deranged and vindictive fraud whose real name was Gertrude Woolcott), is stricken with nephritis and has to be rescued by his stalwart wife from his suddenly hostile companions, and also from the help offered by his crazed paramour, Margot Ruddock, an aspiring actress. This all transpired shortly after Yeats had had a vasectomy in an attempt to restore his sexual potency. ("Who am I," he once asked a friend, "that I should not make a fool of myself?") George Yeats, who comes across as an extraordinary woman in many ways, said to him around this time, "When you are dead people will talk about your love affairs, but I shall say nothing, for I will remember how proud you were."

Be that as it may, the Yeats of his latter years, in the throes of what he called his "second puberty," can be hard to like. What we often see, if we put aside his writing, is an impotent, blue-haired eugenicist enmeshed with a series of unlikely women; preoccupied by notions of heredity, of blood and soil; but nomadically rootless and largely disengaged from his wife and children. Even Thoor Ballylee, his emblematic stone tower, was abandoned once he'd used it up as a subject for poetry. Much has been made of Yeats's supposed flirtation with fascism, and Foster is especially good at delineating his swervings in this direction; but in truth Yeats's political ideas, to the degree to which they can be discerned at all, are more akin to the aristophilic sub-Nietzschean philosophy of the German writer and soldier Ernst Jünger, only less coherent. Like the invisible celestial instructors,

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they were there to bring him metaphors for poetry.

And so there remains the poetry, the writing that justifies the biography—"the great unwieldy poem, all light and mud," as Daniel Albright, the editor of the finest edition of Yeats's *Poems* (Everyman), once described the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound, Yeats's erstwhile disciple. Yeats's poems are certainly more polished and individuated and approachable than the *Cantos*, Pound's long, fragmentary, famously impenetrable masterpiece/aesthetic junk heap. Still, Albright's phrase seems equally apposite to his body of work. There's no doubt that Yeats's writing contains a large amount of mental clutter and mystification, which alters in nature but does not diminish as his career proceeds. But amid the homebrewed, *Matrix*-like transcendentalism and the relentless armorial emblemology—lions and gyres, celestial unicorns and misspelled figures from Celtic mythology—is a constant incursion of what the writer Patrick Kavanagh called "Homeric utterances, poetry sweeping through." And there at the end is "The Circus Animals' Desertion," an astonishing thing, a piece of deathbed self-excoriation so convincing that it's hard not to agree with Yeats that all his previous poems were weak and misguided—hard, that is, until one revisits passages like this, from the great war poem "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen":

But is there any comfort to be found?  
Man is in love and loves what vanishes,  
What more is there to say?

What more is there to say, indeed? If Yeats started his writing life enamored of a notion of disembodied spiritual elitism, at the end, steeped in "the fury and the mire of human veins," trying to begin again in "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart," he seems closer to Shakespeare's Edmund at the moment of his last, desperate cry, "I pant for life." And that's where Yeats leaves us, breathing and dying. The spit and blood are wet upon the page. ▀

Christopher Cahill is the director of the Institute for Irish American Studies at the City University of New York and the editor of the forthcoming anthology *Gather Round Me: The Best of Irish Popular Poetry*.

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## PICTURES FROM AN INQUISITION

*The work of the writer Victor Serge faultlessly captures the labyrinth of bureaucratic incrimination into which the Soviet Union descended*

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

In *Middlemarch* the desiccated pedant Casaubon wastes his life, and the life of another, in a futile search for "the Key to all Mythologies." In *Bleak House* the wearisome and convoluted case of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* eventually exhausts all the resources of the contending parties in the sheer costs of the suit. In *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* a random political murder becomes the excuse for a gigantic, hysterical, all-enveloping bureaucratic investigation, and also the talisman for an ideological witch-hunt that intends to lay bare the most imposing of all conspiracies and convinces the last doubter of the existence of a grand design.

After Dostoyevsky and slightly before Arthur Koestler, but contemporary with Orwell and Kafka and somewhat anticipating Solzhenitsyn, there was Victor Serge. His novels and poems and memoirs, most of them directed at the exposure of Stalinism, were mainly composed in jail or on the run. Some of the manuscripts were confiscated or destroyed by the Soviet secret police; in the matter of poetry Serge was able to outwit them by rewriting from memory the verses he had composed in the Orenburg camp, deep in the Ural Mountain section of the Gulag Archipelago.

For many years Serge was almost lost to view. He was one of those intellectual misfits (I intend no disrespect by the term) who were ground to powder between the upper and nether millstones of Stalin and Hitler. One of his novels was aptly titled *Midnight in the Century* (1939)—the phrase used by old "Left" oppositionists to sum up the nightmare years that culminated in the Hitler-Stalin Pact. He died in penurious

exile in Mexico, in 1947. His scattered works were later reassembled and translated and kept alive by a small group of radical devotees, most notably Peter Sedgwick and Richard Greeman, whose work is both summarized and exceeded in *Victor Serge: The Course Is Set on Hope*, a tough-minded and well-written biography produced by Susan Weissman in 2001. Otherwise, Serge studies have been confined somewhere on the margins delineated by *Dissent* magazine and

respond politely, "It happens that I am not." Among his many noms de guerre was Victor Klein.) He was born Victor Kibalchich in Belgium in 1890 to a family of commingled Russian, Polish, and Montenegrin ancestry, and a relative on his father's side had been hanged after the murder of Czar Alexander II, in 1881. Young Victor soon gravitated to the world of proletarian rebellion, qualifying as a printer and a proofreader and living in the sort of mining village that might have been described by Zola. He took a leading part in denouncing the atrocious rule of King Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo. Impatient with gradualism, and obviously drawn in some way to the depths of society, he removed to Paris, became an anarchist militant with a vagabond streak, and

was sentenced to a five-year stretch in solitary confinement in a French jail for his connection to the then celebrated Bonnot gang. Interestingly, he drew this harsh penalty for refusing to testify against his former comrades. Released in 1917, he went to Barcelona to take part in a brief but intense anarchist revolt, was interned in a gruesome French camp after recrossing the Spanish border, and was exchanged for some French prisoners taken by the Bolsheviks as World War I ground to its appalling conclusion. He thus involuntarily but not reluctantly made his way to Saint Petersburg, or Petrograd, where it looked as if the genuine article of revolution was at last on offer. By the time of his arrival, in 1919, he had

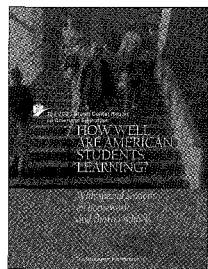


the now defunct *Partisan Review*. Not even Trotskyist sects were always willing to give this veteran revolutionary the respect that was his due: Serge had quarreled with "The Old Man," on matters of principle, several times.

So hunted and so cosmopolitan and so factional was Serge's life that it comes almost as a surprise that he was not Jewish. (When asked if he was—and he was asked fairly frequently—he would

begin to use the name Serge. So before he was thirty he had served some hard time behind bars and behind wire, had been on the losing side a good deal, had gotten to know insurgent Catalonia, and had made a good number of friends on the French intellectual left. All of this hard-won experience was to be pressed into service repeatedly in the even more testing years that lay ahead.

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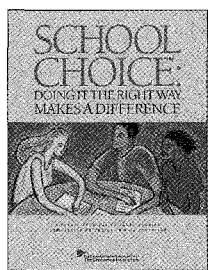


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Serge had a gift for transferring experience to the page with graphic immediacy, and for doing so by rapid alternation between journalism and fiction. His jail time produced a novel titled *Men in Prison* (1930), and his presence in Barcelona another named *Birth of Our Power* (1931). His years in Saint Petersburg generated a fresher of on-the-spot reportage that is much superior to the more widely known work of John Reed. Serge was as convinced as Reed of the need for revolution, but he had fewer illusions. It can be claimed for him that he was the first person to recognize and comprehend the roots of the emerging Stalinist regime, or at least to do so from the inside.

It was perhaps a happy chance, if the phrase can be allowed, that the Bolsheviks put Serge in charge of the captured files of the Okhrana—the czarist secret police. He gave minute attention to these papers, and published a pamphlet

detailing the web of repression and surveillance and provocation that he thus uncovered. (It is to the Okhrana that we owe the creation and propagation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, sometimes mistakenly described as a "forgery"—a forgery, after all, must be of something original or authentic—but perhaps better defined as a cynical yet paranoid concoction: the key of keys to the greatest conspiracy theory of them all.) To have such a redaction supervised by a former prisoner, internee, and deportee was an intelligent move by the Party, but Serge, unlike others, did not thereby become a heresy hunter or an interrogator manqué. Where some might sniff for the presence of subversive or treasonous dissent, his nostrils were attuned to the stench of the secret policeman—a stench he regarded as far more indicative of decay.

One of the earliest actions of Leninism in power was the establishment of the Cheka—first of the many, many police acronyms that would include GPU, NKVD, and KGB. Serge was a militant opponent of the Jew-baiting and homicidal White reactionaries, and fought against them with some physical bravery,

but he saw at once that the permanence of such a secret apparatus on the Red side was a lethal menace of a different kind. His campaign against it, and against the death penalty (briefly abolished in the early years and then reinstated), marked the beginning of his losing battle against a more ruthless form of tyranny. Of the human type attracted to "Chekist" work he wrote in his memoirs, "Long-standing social inferiority-complexes and memories of humiliations and suffering in the Tsar's jails rendered them intractable, and since professional degeneration has rapid effects, the Chekas inevitably consisted of perverted men tending to see conspiracy every-

where and to live in the midst of perpetual conspiracy themselves."

For example, on the night of January 17, 1920, as the decree abolishing the death penalty was being printed, the Cheka seized the opportunity to execute as many as 500 suspects—

or, as Susan Weissman phrases it so caustically, to liquidate their stock. Serge had an instant intuitive understanding of what this portended. The death of the revolution, he was later to write, was a self-inflicted one.

Nonetheless, and fortunately for us if not for him, he resolved to stay on within the Party and to do what he could. Dispatched to Berlin to help with the Communist International, he discovered that Bolshevism was becoming as bureaucratic and intolerant beyond the borders of the USSR as it was within them. But he also learned about the mounting threat of the madness of fascism, and this produced in him a sort of dual consciousness: first, this new enemy needed to be defeated; second, it needed to be understood. The apparatchiks of communism, however, both underestimated the danger and helped to provoke it. Indeed, it could be said of fascism, as Serge was to write with an acuity that makes one almost dizzy, that "[this] new variety of counter-revolution had taken the Russian revolution as its schoolmaster in matters of repression and mass-manipulation through propa-



ganda ... [and] had succeeded in recruiting a host of disillusioned, power-hungry ex-revolutionaries; consequently, its rule would last for years."

Attempting to synthesize these apparent opposites but latent collaborators, Serge came up with the word "totalitarian." He believed that he had originated it himself; there are some rival claimants from the period of what was then called "war communism," but it is of interest that the term has its origins within the Marxist left, just as the term "Cold War" was first used by George Orwell in analyzing a then looming collision of superpowers in 1945. Incidentally, when Serge was later seeking to have his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (1951) published in English, it was to Orwell that he wrote asking for help.

Indeed (not that it did him much good), Serge had a knack for nosing out the right acquaintances. He met Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs during his years outside Russia, and received a warning from Lukacs not to go back. He later not only escorted Nikos Kazantzakis and Panait Istrati around the USSR but also was present when Istrati let fall the remark that made him famous: to the old saw "One can't make an omelet without breaking eggs," Istrati mordantly retorted, "All right, I can see the broken eggs. Where's this omelet of yours?" When the honest old Bolshevik diplomat Adolf Joffe committed suicide in 1927, to call attention to the "Thermidor" that was engulfing the revolution, Serge assisted in organizing a mass turnout for Joffe's funeral; he later realized that he had helped to lead the last legal anti-government protest to be held in Moscow. Within a short time he himself was in one of Stalin's prisons.

Released after some grueling experiences, he remained—despite his misgivings about the personality of Leon Trotsky—a partisan of the left opposition. Had he not been re-arrested in 1933 and deported to internal exile in Orenburg, he might well have been swept up and discarded forever in the period of even more hysterical persecution that followed the assassination of Sergei Kirov, on December 1, 1934. Kirov had been a popular leader of the Party in Leningrad; most historians now agree

## the nature of change

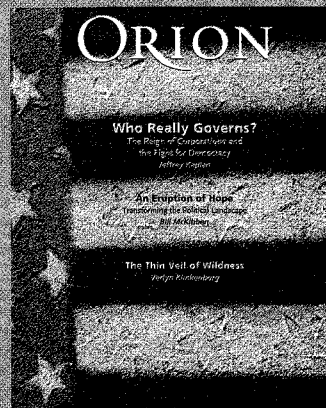
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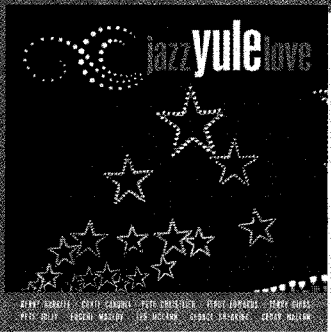
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that his murder was the signal for the true frenzy of the purges to begin. It was the Soviet equivalent of the Reichstag fire.

Most historians also now agree on another important point: that the murder was organized by Stalin himself, either to remove a well-liked man who could have become a rival, or simply to help justify the political pogrom that he had long had in mind. (See in particular Robert Conquest's *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, 1989, and Amy Knight's *Who Killed Kirov?*, 1999.) Some time before the assassination Serge had been overheard to say that what he most feared was the killing of some high Party satrap and the consequent licensing of a more comprehensive terror. Thus what is most interesting about his novel on the subject is that it begins by apparently exculpating Stalin from the main charge.

**T**he *Case of Comrade Tulayev* (1948), which opens with the murder of a high Communist official by that name, makes an enormous sacrifice as a work of suspense by giving away the ostensible "plot" almost at once. We see a righteous and somewhat disturbed young man as he acquires a weapon by chance, takes to carrying it with him everywhere, and to his immense surprise runs into a senior "target of opportunity" on a darkened street. Pulling the trigger on impulse, to relieve his general feelings of alienation, he makes an easy escape, because there is absolutely nothing to connect him to the crime and he did nothing to prepare for it. But this apparently naive device actually imparts a considerable tensile strength to the ensuing chapters, as we see from the reaction of the Party and its leader that nothing in the Soviet Union can be admitted to happen by accident.

The papers briefly announced "the premature death of Comrade Tulayev." The first secret investigation produced sixty-seven arrests in three days. Suspicion at first fell on Tulayev's secretary, who was also the mistress of a student who was not a Party member. Then it shifted to the chauffeur who had brought Tulayev to his door—a Security man with a good record, not a drinker, no questionable relations, a former soldier in the special troops, and a member of the Bureau of his garage cell. Why had

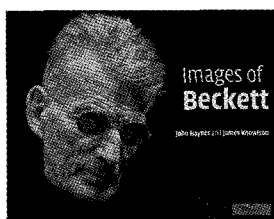
he not waited until Tulayev had entered the house, before driving off? Why, instead of going in immediately, had Tulayev walked a few paces down the sidewalk?

(The subsequent fate of the chauffeur is more than you want to contemplate.) We all now understand that dictatorship depends to an unusual degree on sheer caprice rather than predictable or systematic enforcement, but it was Serge's early insight that those Marxists who had prided themselves above all on their cold and objective lucidity had become "fuddled with a theoretical intoxication bordering on delusion ... enclosed within all the tricks and tomfooleries of servility." (This remark is from his *Memoirs*.)

The best novel of the postwar Stalinist purges—the ones that spread to Eastern Europe—is Eric Ambler's *Judgment on Delchev* (1951). Here, the purge takes the form of isolating an inconvenient dissident (or potential dissident) and destroying his reputation before framing him. There's nothing of this glacial cynicism in Serge's novel. The post-1934 spy fever may have had a core of rationality when it began, or was inaugurated, but its special feature was the sheer mania and panic in which it engulfed society, becoming an exhausting, unstoppable thing in itself. At one point (Doris Lessing describes it somewhere in her account of abandoning communism) medieval instruments of torture were taken from Russian museums and deployed in the cellars and interrogation pits of Stalin's police. The image is perfect for evoking the choking medieval nightmare of plague-dread, xenophobia, and persecution that enveloped the Soviet Union and destroyed the last remnants of its internationalism. If the characters and automatons of *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* understand any one thing, it is the idea that the enemy is everywhere, and everyone. Poor old Makeyev, one of Serge's better-drawn minor characters, is a plebeian mediocrity with some physical courage who becomes a regional commissar by dint of brute force and sterling loyalty. He is the negation of the Bolshevik cosmopolitan—a figure from Chekhov. He at first feels himself "integrated into the dicta-



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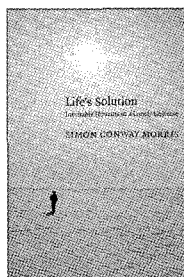
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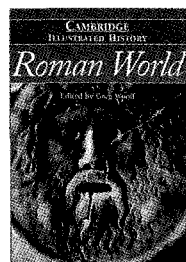
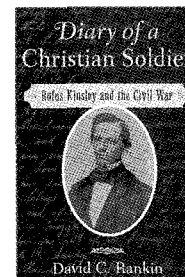
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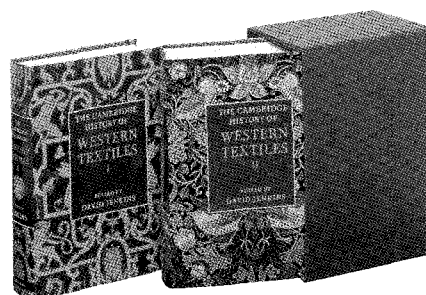
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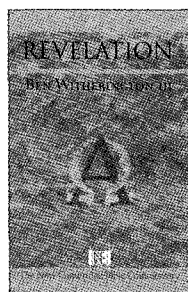
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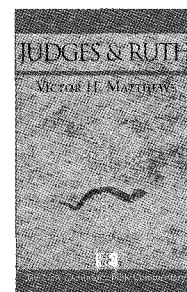
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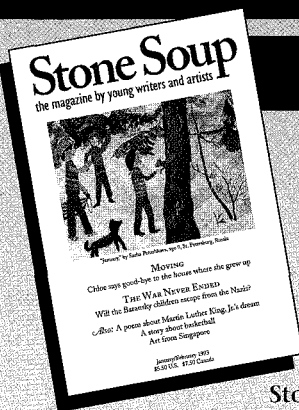
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torship of the proletariat like a good steel screw set into its proper place in some admirable, supple, and complex machine.” But Stalin—“the man of steel”—was at the helm of a locomotive determined to go off the rails, and who can redeem a Makeyev from a catastrophe like that?

As in the most intricate and sadistic courts of antique Oriental despotism, the thing to be feared almost as much as being “out of favor” was the special terror of sudden advancement. (Many later personal reminiscences of Stalin were to record that it was in genial mood that he was most to be feared.) I shall have to be forgiven for quoting at length here, since Serge captured this mental and moral atmosphere so faultlessly.

Erchov, recalled from the Far East, where he had thought himself happily forgotten by the Personnel Service, had been offered an unparalleled promotion: High Commissar for Security in conjunction with Commissar of the People for Internal Affairs, which practically carried with it the rank of marshal—the sixth marshal—or was it the third, since three of the five had disappeared? “Comrade Erchov, the Party puts its confidence in you! I congratulate you!” The words were spoken, his hand shaken, the office (it was one of the Central Committee offices, on the same floor as the General Secretariat) was full of smiles. Unannounced, the Chief entered quickly, looked him up and down for a split second—a superior studying an inferior; then, so simply, so cordially, smiling like the others and perfectly at ease, the Chief shook Maxim Andreyevich Erchov’s hand and looked into his eyes with perfect friendliness. “A heavy responsibility, Comrade Erchov. Bear it well.” The press photographer flashed his magnesium lightning over all the smiles ... Erchov had reached the pinnacle of his life, and he was afraid.

In the ensuing sentences, Serge transcends Gogol and anticipates *Nineteen Eighty-four*:

Three thousand dossiers, of capital importance because they called for capital punishment, three thousand nests of hissing vipers, suddenly descended like an avalanche upon his life, to remain with him every instant. For a moment the greatness of the Chief reassured him. The Chief, addressing him as “Maxim Andreyevich” in a cordial tone, paternally



advised him "to go easy with personnel, keeping the past in mind yet never failing in vigilance, to put a stop to abuses."—"Men have been executed whom I loved, whom I trusted, men precious to the Party and the State!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Yet the Political Bureau cannot possibly review every sentence! It is up to you," he concluded. "You have my entire confidence." The power that emanated from him was spontaneous, human, and perfectly simple; the kindly smile, in which the russet eyes and the bushy mustache joined, attested it; it made you love him.

Erchov, as you will have intuited from the above passage, doesn't last long in the job and is soon humiliated and purged in his turn. But by then he has helped to set in motion a machinery of inquisition, supported by a Borgesian labyrinth of bureaucratic incrimination, that assumes a horrific autonomy. Men who were miles away at the time, or who had already been exiled or jailed, are put through the mill again and compelled to answer impossible questions. In faraway Spain, in the death throes of the republic and the last gasp of the Catalan revolution, with Franco's and Hitler's forces at the very gates, random Trotskyists are kidnapped and forced to confess their part in the murder of Comrade Tulayev.

Or not to confess it. Serge was a friend to Andrés Nin, the leader of Catalonia's left-opposition POUM (and the translator of Dostoyevsky into Catalan), and he always had a special regard for the old revolutionaries who never "broke." In many ways, placed next to *Midnight in the Century*, this novel is their memorial. There's inevitable speculation about the influence exerted, by means of both title and subject matter, on Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. It is certainly true that in *Tulayev* we meet the figure of Kiril Rublev, an old Bolshevik who is strenuously (and eloquently) pressed to admit to inconceivable offenses because he can perform a last service to the Party by abasing himself in this way. But unlike Koestler's Rubashov, many of Serge's characters stubbornly decline the logic of the grand inquisitor.

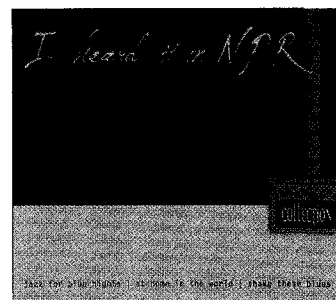
Serge himself was one of the few to refuse it, and this probably saved his

life. There came a time when the agitation abroad in his behalf became too much to overlook, and when a campaign for his release—led by Romain Rolland—had embarrassed even the intellectual prostitutes of the French fellow-traveling classes. Stalin decided to examine the case in person, but before doing so he asked his police chiefs what crimes Serge had confessed to while in the Orenburg camp. He must have been somewhat startled to be told that the prisoner had confessed to nothing at all (a distinct rarity in those times), and this made it easier to release and deport Serge without too much loss of face.

Given this standard of fortitude, and given the contempt Serge always felt for Stalin's collaborators, a remarkable feature of *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* is its chiaroscuro. In one passage the monstrous figure of "The Chief" is represented as a prisoner of fate, only pretending to arbitrate the destiny of a sixth of the earth's surface and of every one of its inhabitants. That Serge intended no lenience here we may be sure, but we may likewise be sure that he would never have swallowed the later euphemisms and half-truths of Khrushchev, putting blame for all the enormities of an epoch on the evil of a single individual. One of the most despicable engineers of the Tulayev witch-hunt, a creepy old time-server named Popov who trades on a reputation for staunch service, is limned not like a Iago but like a modern Polonius, full of pathetic advice and mumbling rhetoric. And this old wreck has his Ophelia—a daughter in Paris whose spontaneity and generosity will not allow her to take part in the lie. The freshness and honesty of Xenia Popov are eventually suicidal, but deadly also to her father's sordid compromise with the usurper's court. In its remorseless emphasis on the ineluctable along with its insistence on the vitality of individual human nature, *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* is one of the most Marxist novels ever written—as it is also one of the least. ■

*Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair. His latest book, A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq, has just been published.*

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BOOKS

## BURGER DELUXE

*The benefits of conspicuous consumption are conspicuously overlooked*

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

.....

Can the future of our planet be glimpsed in a line of overweight midwestern tourists in Nike caps in Las Vegas, gawking at a Harley-Davidson Café next to a fake Eiffel Tower next to a fake Egyptian pyramid, while all around Disneyesque jets of water sway to the croonings of Celine Dion? If you think the answer is yes, and this Oktoberfest of consumerism depresses you ... look in the mirror! Do you see a *New York Times* subscription? Do you see Italian loafers? Do you see a bottle of \$18 Chardonnay (or, more darkly, some trumpy varietal you hate to admit is Australian, and six bucks)? Just having the luxury of time to sadly ponder the collapse of civilization suggests you're a member of a demographic PRIZM (Potential Rating Index for Zip Markets) cluster such as "Money and Brains" or "Furs and Station Wagons" (more likely to consume natural cold cereal, pumpernickel bread, the BMW 5-series), as much defined by your purchases as, say, "Old-Old," "Levittown U.S.A.," or "Shotguns and Pickups" (this last more likely to consume chain

saws, snuff, frozen potato products, whipped toppings).

Never mind how exquisitely discerning we think we are. In twenty-first-century America our stories have become one and the same: we work to consume, we live to consume, we are what we consume. And not just that; according to a recent spate of appalling—

yet intriguing—new books in what one reviewer has called "the growing field of luxe lit," it seems we're all starting to consume the same things. The melting pot is becoming a fondue, as increasing numbers of Americans hurl their hard-earned dollars at such unnecessaries as lattes, gourmet chocolate,

Napa wine, massage, lingerie, designer wear, and Mercedes coupes. No longer just for super-rich blue bloods, the "luxury" experience has become thoroughly middle-class, even prole (two words: "Gucci T-shirt"). But is this good news or bad news?

In the view of Michael J. Silverstein and Neil Fiske, the authors of the depressingly hilarious and hilariously depressing *Trading Up*, it is good news.

**TRADING UP**  
The New  
American Luxury  
by Michael J. Silverstein  
and Neil Fiske  
Portfolio

**LIVING IT UP**  
America's Love  
Affair With Luxury  
by James B. Twitchell  
Simon & Schuster

Particularly if you're the CEO of Bath & Body Works, which Fiske is, or the head of Victoria's Secret ("a \$3.5 billion multichannel brand"), as is the book's preface writer. Also apparently not hurting, according to this euphoric business text, are the makers of such meteoric "New Luxury" hits as Sub-Zero refrigerators, Viking ranges, Kendall-Jackson wines, Belvedere vodka, Sam Adams lager, and Callaway golf clubs—and, since we're making lists, Starbucks, BMW, Williams-Sonoma, Panera Bread, Coach, and the Cheesecake Factory, all specialty businesses that actually, incredibly, grew during the 2001–2002 downturn.

The question for entrepreneurs—to whom this book, with its admirable sangfroid, is aimed—is: Why do some New Luxury products explode, while others belly-flop harder than a plunging Cadillac Cimarron? The answer: emotional engagement. It's not enough to trick out what's basically a Chevy, as Old Luxury dinosaur Cadillac infamously did with the Cimarron, and hope that folks will buy it for sentimental and/or vaguely musty status reasons. According to the authors, New Luxury consumers seek actual technical superiority, or at least a perception of such, and fulfillment in four specific "emotional spaces": "Taking Care of Me," "Connecting," "Questing," and "Individual Style." Example:

BMW owners wash their cars more frequently than owners of other cars do. They park them on the street and then turn back to gaze lovingly at them as they walk away. They say that the first sight of their BMW in the airport parking lot is like a warm welcome home.

The stinging comparison: "It's a rare Taurus driver who can be found gazing fondly at his parked car."

And how is all this vigorous trading up from Taurus to BMW possible? Happily for New Luxury marketers, Americans are working more hours than ever, have more disposable income, and have less time to spend it in; and the family has collapsed. (Startling statistic, delivered without comment: "In 1996, the lifetime probability of being divorced for a twenty-five-year-old was 52 percent.") Hence typical New Luxury consumers

THOMAS HOEPKER/MAGNUM PHOTOS



are "lonely, fearful, stressed, and longing for peace, but they are also hopeful, optimistic, and eager to try new things." As *The Wall Street Journal*, quoted by Silverstein and Fiske, suggested, they are today's frozen-faced Willy Lomans: "growing numbers of salesmen and lawyers, bankers and stockbrokers are fixing their facial expressions with Botox." They are our Eukanuba-hoarding singletons: in many of America's 35 million non-family households "pets have become the new children," in that 83 percent of pet owners call themselves "Mommy" or "Daddy" when talking to their pets (up from 55 percent in 1995), and almost two thirds celebrate their pets' birthdays. They are angry divorcees sullenly queuing at the Cheesecake Factory. They account for the astonishing sales of Viking ranges, 75 percent of which are never used.

Now that we're thoroughly depressed, it's time to slosh out a mug of Belvedere (\$28 a bottle) and turn to James B. Twitchell's more sardonic but in an odd way more reassuring *Living It Up*. A professor at the University of Florida, Twitchell has the decency to be repulsed by America's Hogarth-esque orgy of frivolous consumption. But he's leery of this repulsion—his repulsion, our repulsion ... and theirs. By "theirs" I mean that of such killjoys as Thorstein Veblen (who coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" in his 1899 *Theory of the Leisure Class*), Juliet Schor (*The Overspent American*, 1998), and John Kenneth Galbraith (*The Affluent Society*, 1958). After all, Twitchell juicily reports,

John Kenneth Galbraith spends the summer just to the south of me in Vermont. He has a huge spread and a beautiful house, nice stone fences, ancient oaks ... takes jet planes to Switzerland to his digs in Gstaad, great skiing.

See? With a Galbraith "it's okay to buy a Steinway baby grand, take a trip to the south of France to attend a kaffeeklatch on the plight of the Etruscans, or send your kid to Harvard at 30K a year," but God forbid you throw craps at Caesar's Palace. In short, for cloistered academics "luxury has become a mallet with which one pounds the taste of others."

To consider "luxury" always a bad thing, Twitchell argues, is simply to ignore history.

Almost without fail, one generation's indulgence becomes the next generation's necessity. Think buttons, window glass, rugs, fermented juice, the color purple, door handles, lace, enamel, candles, pillows, mirrors, combs, umbrellas.

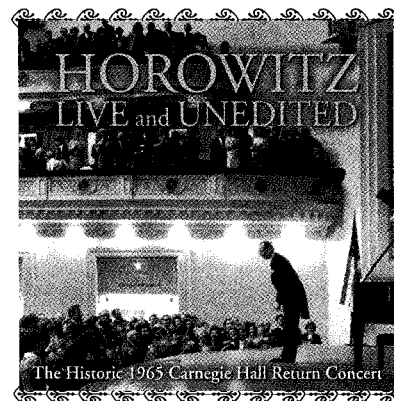
Nail clippers and shorts and socks were once a luxury, and don't forget the least frivolous "indulgence" of all: indoor plumbing. In a way, the rich provide society with a valuable service, because they pay the "high first costs" of emerging technology. "Sure, the 'upfronters' get HDTV, digital cameras, laser eye surgery, Palm Pilots ... They also get first crack at Edsels, the Betamax, eight-track stereo, and Corfam shoes."

Which is not to say the purveyors of modern luxury have anything like the common good in mind. At the nucleus of today's dark, pulsing luxe star are scary international conglomerates—for instance, France's LVMH Moët Hennessy-Louis Vuitton—that franchise "luxury" in chain boutiques from Miami Beach to Rodeo Drive and are "every bit as rapacious as Philip Morris and every bit as sophisticated as the Church of Rome." Pulling us in on a perfume-strip conveyor belt are the Condé Nast magazines, whose ads—particularly *Vanity Fair*'s—Twitchell uproariously deconstructs ("The frigid vampire women of Versace wait for dinner"). And yet, paging through the glossy parade of Hermès ties, Martex sheets, and Patek Philippe watches, Twitchell reminds us that human beings have always fetishized objects: the seventeenth-century Dutch had tulips; Stendhal had the pulse-pounding frescoes of Giotto; Daisy Buchanan had Gatsby's shirts; the Vatican ... well, the Vatican put everything under glass, from the knucklebones of saints to ruby-encrusted miters.

Indeed:

The use of luxury is close to the use of sacred objects, namely, a way to make distinctions not just between and among other objects but between parts of experience. Consuming tells you not just who you are but *where* you are ... In church the sacred objects are used to punctuate the times of day. Certain objects are part

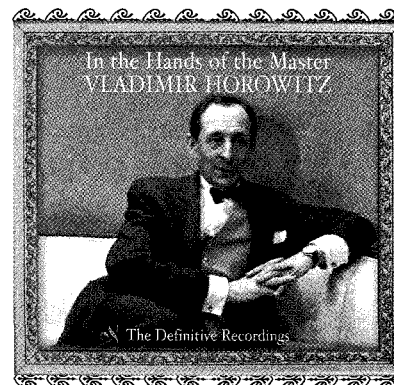
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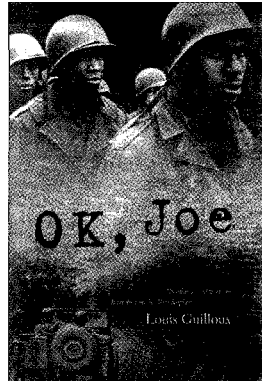
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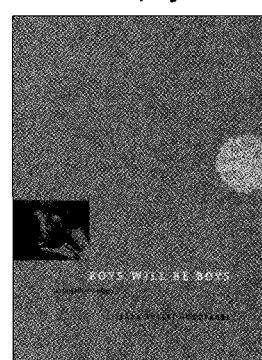
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of morning prayers ... midday meals ... evening vespers. Ditto the objects of human maturation. Take cars ... You get a used jalopy at sixteen, a sports car at twenty-two, a sedan at marriage, a stationwagon with kids, an SUV for midlife independence, a Porsche for midlife crisis, then the Lincoln Town Car ...

And

"Am I ready for the Chevy Suburban?" asks the modern Prufrock, not "Do I want kids?"

In short: "Materialism is not the opposite of spiritualism. Materialism is what you spiritualize when you have plenty of stuff." Those who don't have the stuff must construct instead a fully furnished heaven. And so, *Living It Up*

finally argues, bemoan if you will the fact that as materialism—the shallowest of all the isms—marches across the globe, Berlin Walls crumble, imams fall, and indigenous cultures collapse. Wring your hands over the fact that golfers worldwide annually spend the equivalent of a small country's GNP. But perhaps if certain sand-trap spiritual leaders could develop a really good swing on the golf course of life, they wouldn't be questing so damn hard in the name of a positively luxe afterlife and ruining tee time for the rest of us. ▀

*Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and performer whose solo show Sugar Plum Fairy will be running at the Geffen Playhouse, in Los Angeles, in November and December. Her most recent book is A Year in Van Nuys (2001).*

## BOOKS

### THIS BOY'S LIT

.....

Near the end of *This Boy's Life* (1989), Tobias Wolff's memoir of childhood (and his best-known book), the adolescent hero escapes a rough home and an indifferent early-sixties public education in Washington State by the grace of a scholarship to the fancy Hill School, back east. Wolff's new volume, *Old School*, is offered as a novel, but it seems in some respects to continue the story. Readers learn, for example, of the young protagonist's hardscrabble days in Washington, and hear occasional mention of the duplicitous father they've come to know not just from *This Boy's Life* but also from work by Wolff's brother, Geoffrey (*The Duke of Deception*, 1979).



**OLD SCHOOL**  
by Tobias Wolff  
Knopf

Neither Hill nor the young narrator is named this time out, but each is rendered with vivid sympathy—especially the school. A progressive headmaster is trying to nudge it toward meritocracy, banishing class consciousness in favor of literary snobbery. The masters who teach English already receive more deference than their colleagues in other disciplines, and brief visits by such belletristic eminences as Edmund Wilson

and Robert Penn Warren are occasions of great excitement on the wooded campus. "The absence of an actual girl to compete for meant that every other prize became feminized," the narrator tells us. The writing contests, whose winners get a private audience with the visiting author, are fought with special fierceness.

Wolff's hero wishes for anointing by "hands that had written living stories and poems, hands that had touched the hands of other writers." As the novel opens, in the fall of 1960, it is the wrinkled and famous palms of Robert Frost for which he and the other boys make greedy grasp. The narrator's rivals are nicely characterized by the literary styles of their submissions: George Kellogg works in traditional forms and already seems "more professor than writer," let alone student; Jeff Purcell, trying to transcend his privileged background, has "written a ballad about a miner being sent deep into the earth to perish in a cave-in while the mine owner hand-feeds filet mignon to his hunting dogs." When it comes to prose efforts, the narrator and his roommate—both of whom strain to hide the fact that their fathers are Jewish—are almost comically in debt to Hemingway.

*Old School's* literary joustings turn it into an offbeat commonplace book of



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what was no doubt Wolff's own youthful reading. The author parodies the visiting writers—their platform personae and interview manners—with charm and astuteness. The book's comic high point turns out to involve not Frost's affectations of rusticity but the appearance of Ayn Rand, who has been invited by a kindly trustee in the mistaken belief that she's an ordinary conservative. The personal cruelty she displays during an *ex cathedra* fireside chat—"Boys! Please! You are born to be giants, not sacrifices to some ... brainless slattern worrying about the next payment on the refrigerator"—helps to bring the narrator out of his own brief Howard Roark phase. A reacquaintance with Hemingway's wounded, heroically tentative Nick Adams completes the process: "You can't read 'Indian Camp' and then go back to *The Fountainhead*. Everything seems bloated and cheesy ..."

The announcement of a visit by Hemingway himself induces two character-building catastrophes, one for the narrator and one for the dean, the first involving plagiarism and the second some personal mythmaking in the manner of the historian Joseph Ellis, who let his Mount Holyoke students believe that his own early history had been rather more dramatic than it really was. Wolff adds unexpected, affecting twists to each transgression and consequence; the results are altogether more satisfying than the way he left hanging, morally and otherwise, the fraud at the end of *This Boy's Life*—namely, the author's own faking of his way into the Hill School. Perhaps this novel (dedicated to "my teachers") is meant to be, in some late way, penitential. (Wolff was, for whatever reason, expelled from Hill.) In any case, it is a fine offering, manly in spirit and style, less hangdog than the somewhat Carverian memoir.

Throughout *Old School*, Wolff displays exceptional skill in capturing the small sights and sensations that evoke the whole rarefied world he's taking us back to: "the smell of floor wax and wool and boys living close together in overheated rooms"; the "great Persian rug ... covered with cookie crumbs." He conveys the sublimation and sexual messaging that occur all at once when

the boys sing to a master's young wife ("It was a kind of ravishing"), and with the same exactitude discerns the boys' wary relations with one another.

*Old School's* somewhat pedagogical nature inclines one toward a few schoolmasterish objections. Its gradual accrual (three episodes from it appeared in *The New Yorker*) may have lulled the author into writing a last chapter that, although a rattling good story, seems more like an appendage than a conclusion. I furthermore think that these cowlicked white teenagers are a little ahead of their time in calling Jackie Kennedy a "fox." And let me say this, above all, Mr. Wolff: the lack of quotation marks around the dialogue is a ridiculous piece of postmodern pretentiousness that has no place in your book. Not when it can stand with the best of what some old boys (Louis Auchincloss, Richard Yates) have produced in a waning American genre. —THOMAS MALLON

## ON THE ROAD AND OFF THE WALL

.....

Novelist, poet, journalist, wit, and world-class diner-out, Rose Macaulay was one of the most popular writers and personalities in England from the 1920s until her death, in 1958. The ebullient Macaulay was friends, it seemed, with everyone. Rupert Brooke, Gilbert Murray, Harold Nicolson, John Betjeman, and Virginia Woolf were only a few of those who prized an intelligence that, though "acid," in Nicolson's words, was "citrous merely and never poisoned."

Macaulay wrote twenty-three novels, including *Potterism*, *Told by an Idiot*, and *The World My Wilderness*. Her most famous was her last: *The Towers of Trebizond*, which first appeared in 1956 and is now being reissued, with a new introduction by Jan Morris. The book was wildly successful in its day, and its opening line ("Take my camel, dear," said my aunt Dot, as she climbed down

from this animal on her return from High Mass") became famous, a byword for the off-the-wall humor that was Macaulay's specialty.

The elderly Aunt Dot, a compulsive traveler with a zealous missionary spirit, has organized a trip into Turkey with the vague idea of converting its Muslim inhabitants, and especially its oppressed women, to Anglicanism. She drags along with her the Rev. the Hon. Father Hugh Chantry-Pigg, an "ancient bigot" and a very High-Church Anglican, and her niece Laurie, the novel's narrator, whose goofy, rambling reflections set its tone. Along the way they encounter a bizarre cast of characters that includes British spies, Seventh-day Adventists, archaeologists, and a seemingly endless parade of busy literary travelers; Byzantium and the Levant were popular destinations in the 1950s, and most of the writers Laurie knows seem to be in Turkey researching their Turkey books. The party meets with a series of truly absurd adventures before returning to England—without, needless to say, having converted a single Turk to its creed.

*The Towers of Trebizond* brings together several of Macaulay's abiding interests: exotic travel, liturgical disputation, Church history, and ancient ruins. (Macaulay's other enduring masterpiece is the lush and scholarly *Pleasure of Ruins*.) "I have a passion for *mélange* and the fantastically impure," she once commented, and one of the wonderful elements of this novel is the way it works as a historical travelogue: through Laurie's eyes we see Trebizond (modern Trabzon) and the rest of Turkey not only in their contemporary, Muslim guise but as they were seen in turn by Jason, Xenophon, Ovid, Justinian, and the Crusaders. Macaulay deftly peels away the centuries, making *The Towers of Trebizond* one of the most erudite of books. It is also one of the funniest.

The novel's farcical polish has kept many readers from comprehending its serious core. Laurie—feckless, appealing, and sometimes treacherous—is actually on a sort of spiritual quest. Long involved in an adulterous affair, she feels herself closed off from the Anglican Church but is unable to turn her back on it. Here Macaulay, who was involved



THE TOWERS  
OF TREBIZOND

by Rose  
Macaulay  
New York  
Review Books



for twenty years with a married man, writes from experience. *The Towers of Trebizond*, a send-up of Anglican excess, is also a valentine to High Anglicanism. Father Chantry-Pigg, who "believed everything, from the Garden of Eden to the Day of Judgment," represents the ridiculous side of the creed; so does Aunt Dot, who urges her niece never to be narrow-minded but always to remember, of course, "that *we* are *right*." But to Macaulay as to Laurie, the Anglican Church "is a wonderful and most extraordinary pageant of contradictions, and I, at least, want to be inside it."

This, then, is the "message." But *The Towers of Trebizond* has been loved by many thousands of readers who have not the slightest interest in religion or those who lapse from it; Macaulay's book remains a tour de force of sustained comedy, in spite of the fact that in the half century since the novel's publication the English social world and the Eastern landscape she so lovingly describes have changed beyond recognition. —BROOKE ALLEN

## CAT TALES

.....

New York Review Books—which for the past four years, in one of publishing's happiest recent developments, has been unearthing unjustly forgotten treasures for adults—is reissuing these stories, first published in the 1940s and early 1950s, as part of its new series of children's classics. That the shy yet social heroine of this collection is named Jenny Linsky, I took to be an excellent sign, a nondescript surname being quite unusual for a cat. I wasn't disappointed. With their remarkable warmth and unstrained whimsy, these stories, together with their simply sketched illustrations, exhibit the most charming qualities of a typical eight-year-old. And the difficulties a sensitive cat faces—the desire to wow a well-established group of cool cats; what to do when a bully



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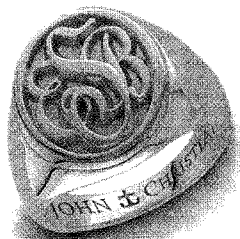
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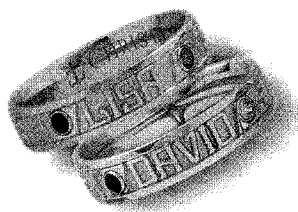
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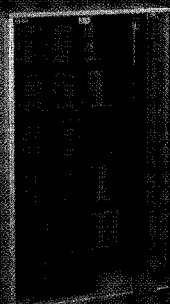
dog steals your scarf; feelings of jealousy, boredom, embarrassment, shame, and loneliness—are those with which eight-year-olds (not to mention thirty-eight-year-olds) will be familiar. In the end things always work out well for winsome Jenny and her exceptionally kind friends, which, if not familiar, is certainly gratifying. As with any successful work of fiction, however, what makes these stories especially pleasing is not the relevance of the issues they address but the skill with which their characters and scenes are drawn. The members of the Cat Club (who meet regularly to sing and dance and feast on fish in Captain Tinker's garden), and the other cats with whom Jenny consorts in Lower Manhattan, have distinct personalities, recognizable by and interesting to human beings, presumably the bulk of Averill's readership. However, whereas the animals in many children's books are merely people with fur, Averill captures the essential catness of her characters. When Jenny is afraid, for instance, she lies all day on a soapbox in the cellar. While searching for ice skates, she ransacks a drawer of fishing tackle. When she and Pickles, the cat mascot of a New York City fire company, discuss the fact that they are broke and so cannot throw a party, she "poke[s] her paw in a crack in the sidewalk, as if she hope[s] to find a penny"—an optimistic habit anyone acquainted with a cat will have witnessed. Obviously, Averill colors her stories with abundant flights of clever fancy. (Her cats are partial to accessories, such as—my favorite—an Indian feathered headdress borrowed from a doorman.) But the nonchalance with which she delivers these makes them as real as her grounding details. Although adults may occasionally squirm at touches of didacticism that help to shape the tales' plots, children will find Jenny's lessons about emotions and behavior helpful and reassuring. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

## Recent books by *Atlantic* authors:

*Squash: A History of the Game*, by James Zug. Scribner. This book grew out of Zug's article "The Last Squash Tennis Player," which appeared in the January 2002 *Atlantic*.

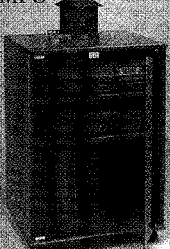
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## THE LONELY PASSION

*A Sex and the City writer looks for love*

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

**T**he *Between Boyfriends Book* is slight, glib, clever to a point, and exceedingly pleased with itself. Its author, Cindy Chupack, is an executive producer and writer for *Sex and the City*, and—not surprisingly—book and television show share a tone and ethos. I say this without reservation, although I do not watch the program; neither, however, am I impervious to its cultural ubiquity—its catchphrases and antic turns of plot are staples of some of the magazines

I read, and I can't count the number of conservative-minded books and articles I've read lately that gesture toward the show as *prima facie* evidence of our precipitous moral decline. For me, the show's popularity is less portentous, but does raise a set of perplexing questions. To wit: Why does Sarah Jessica Parker, one of the great jolie laides of our time, allow the costumers to suit her up in those fright-night outfits each week? And why in the world do the parents of young girls allow them to watch the show? (I confess to having been a passionate and precocious viewer of *Love, American Style*, which sent me into romantic reveries of an intensity and specificity perhaps not normal for an eight-year-old. But it is also true that the series did not introduce me to a single euphemism for anal sex.)

Setting these mysteries of the universe aside, we turn our attention to this collection of essays, many of which were originally published in the "Dating Dictionary" column of *Glamour* magazine. The author's intent is to make us laugh out loud, and she goes at it hammer and tongs, grinding out comic nicknames for her uncountable boyfriends, telling shaggy-dog stories, wheeling her blameless father on stage for a brief, thankless turn as concerned Midwest Dad. She is also deeply dedicated to shocking us. We are intended, I suspect, to gasp in thrilled delight when she counsels women nerv-

ous about the potential consequences of a *Sex and the City* lifestyle to get tested for HIV, "buy a megapack of condoms and get on with your life," and when she reports that her mission to go on seventeen dates before settling down with a new boyfriend "started with a bang. Literally." Naughtiness itself is in the air

when she tells us that she has a girlfriend who broke up with a man because "his nose looked like a penis." (This is an objection that may not leave many

men in the running for this woman—but that's another matter altogether, I suppose.) Unfortunately for Chupack, none of these revelations shocked me terribly much. In matters of the bedroom I tend to agree with my great-

### THE BETWEEN BOYFRIENDS BOOK

by Cindy Chupack  
St. Martin's Press



grandmother, late of Saint Patrick's parish, who always maintained that people ought to do whatever they want, so long as they don't do it in the street where they might frighten the horses. What I did find surprising about *The Between Boyfriends Book* was that mixed in with the megapacks of condoms and the one-night stands were some of the most traditional attitudes about dating I've seen in a long while.

Complaining about the tendency of men to break up with her without much

fanfare or remorse, Chupack muses that she would "like to feel like more than simply a notch in somebody's bedpost." The phrase itself is so old-fashioned that I assumed she was setting us up for a laugh, but she is dead serious. She informs us several times that the overall intent of her energetic sexual program is not the zipless fuck of yesteryear; rather, the poor thing turns out to be in search of The One. Chupack is having a hard time finding a husband, she reports—which bowled me over, because it had not occurred to me that she was looking for one. It's one thing to whip off your pajama bottoms, start following the specific and humiliating instructions of a late-night telephone caller, and then suddenly hang up when you realize you're not exactly sure who has called you. It's quite another thing to behave in a way that might entice an investment banker into a lifelong commitment. That men are delighted to have sex with women they barely know but are skittish about marrying ones who offer themselves too freely is a fact of life that

women have understood down through the ages. There are wan moments when Chupack cottons on to this, including an italicized bit of counsel: "*Dating around doesn't mean sleeping around.*" In fact, she discovered some benefits to not jumping into the sack on the first date: "I found that it actually helps you slow things down." Alert Stockholm: there's got to be a Nobel Prize for this kind of thinking.

At the heart of Chupack's enterprise is a disregard for men that may suggest why she is striking out so often. *The Between*

*Boyfriends Book* describes men in a manner so dismissive and callous that had a man written such a book about women, the cries of misogyny would be deafening. But upper-middle-class women hold a lot of power in our culture these days. Still, though, there's one bit of power women will never wrest from men: the decision to deem one group of women candidates for marriage and another group candidates for quick and quasi-anonymous sex. ■

Caitlin Flanagan is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

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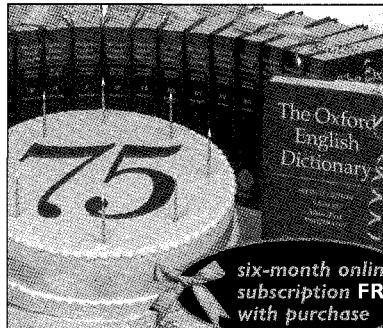
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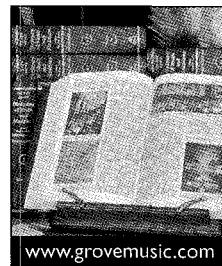
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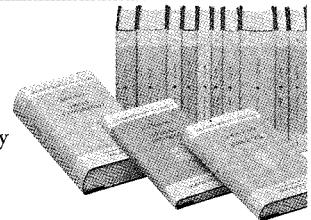
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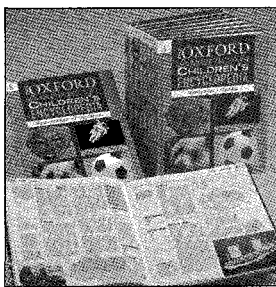
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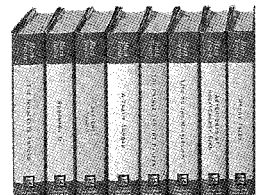
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## SETTING THE BAR

*When our standards don't live up to our standards*

BY CULLEN MURPHY

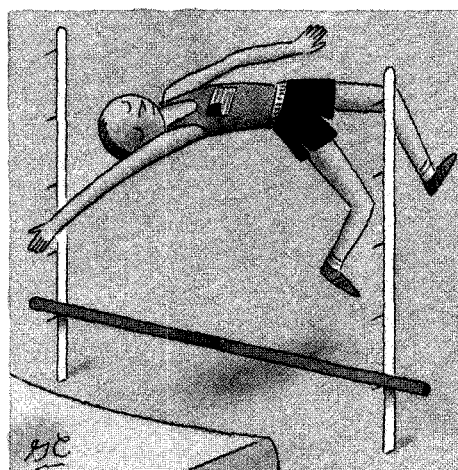
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Earlier this fall the literary critic Harold Bloom unloosed a memorable blast in the *Los Angeles Times*. His target was the National Book Foundation and its decision to bestow an award for "distinguished contribution" to the novelist Stephen King. This award, Bloom noted, had previously been given to such masters of the literary craft as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and Arthur Miller, whereas Stephen King's thrillers "sell in the millions but do little more for humanity than keep the publishing world afloat." Bloom saw the decision to honor King as one more episode in "the shocking process of dumbing down our cultural life."

Shortly before Bloom's article appeared, that same paper ran a news story about yet another instance of sliding norms—in this case, involving how the military deals with its deserters. I remember reading about a scholarly conference in Belgium some years ago on the subject of executions for desertion during World War I. One of the participants argued that it would be wrong to regard the fleeing soldiers as derelict in their duty; they weren't deserting, silly, they were "merely exploring the boundaries of consent and personal motivation in a democracy at war" (the boundaries being somewhat to the rear). That argument has now been embraced in spirit by the U.S. Army, which today—even under the Bush Administration and in time of war—almost never prosecutes deserters and, according to the news account, takes a "passive, good-riddance approach to its run-aways." In 2001 about 5,000 people de-

cided to simply up and leave the U.S. military. No American has been shot for desertion since 1945.

Whatever happened to standards? This has been a consistent refrain of social observers and literary critics down through the ages, and although some of these people are professional curmudgeons, it's hard to argue that they don't have a point. My father, when in-



formed that Bill Clinton had admitted to indulging in "inappropriate" behavior with Monica Lewinsky, observed that he could remember a day when "inappropriate" meant wearing brown shoes in public after 6:00 P.M. An article in the pages of this magazine in 1892 took note of softening standards for admission to Harvard, but the "new" criteria it described (including "an elementary working knowledge of four languages, two ancient, Latin and Greek, and two modern, French and German") would seem almost laughably stringent to mod-

ern eyes. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, writing in *The American Scholar* a decade ago, described how society's increasingly relaxed standards were allowing more and more marginal behavior to gain gradual acceptance. He called the process "defining deviancy down."

As foreigners are often quick to point out, the entire American way of life sometimes seems to be a monument to eroding standards. One of George Carlin's most famous routines, back in the 1970s, centered on the seven words one couldn't use on television or radio. Today most of those words are used multiple times in any episode of *The Sopranos*. In many jurisdictions people were once drawn for service on juries

from the pool of registered voters; voter registration is now so low in some places that courts must draw from the pool of people with driver's licenses. Until recently it was rare for professional basketball teams to recruit players directly from high school; high school students, it was argued, simply lacked sufficient personal or athletic maturity. LeBron James, Tracy McGrady, and Kevin Garnett, among others, show what has happened to this standard. For most of my lifetime North America had only five lakes that were officially

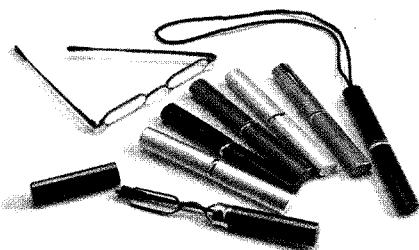
deemed Great—until 1998, when Congress voted to classify Lake Champlain, on the border between Vermont and New York, as a sixth Great Lake. The provision was actually signed into law, but was later revoked. (The instigator of Champlain's enhancement, Senator Patrick Leahy, of Vermont, gamely weathered criticism as "the Fourth Stooze.")

Of course, the situation with respect to standards is not straightforward, because for every example of declining norms in one area of life there is an example of rising norms somewhere

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else. Educators have plenty of bones to pick with aspects of standardized testing, but there's no question that assessment tests are increasingly widespread, having been mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Almost every state has by now set a blood-alcohol concentration of .08 percent as the legal threshold for intoxication while driving—stricter than the 0.1 percent that used to be common. It is well known that language purists in France vociferously resist the encroachment of words from America; but the French have been joined in this hand-wringing by worried elites in England, Russia, Spain, and elsewhere. The writing of a résumé was once a personal and even idiosyncratic enterprise, encompassing a variety of approaches, but there now exists a Professional Association of Résumé Writers and Career Coaches to certify practitioners and enforce a code of ethics.

And although the Pentagon may have become lax on the matter of desertion, it is a Torquemada on the matter of obesity. In fiscal year 2002 the Marine Corps discharged eighty-eight people because of an excessive percentage of body fat; the Air Force discharged 394, and the Army discharged 945. (The Navy did not discharge anyone for obesity—perhaps because in that service the extra buoyancy is actually an advantage.) The Russians, no doubt honoring some vestigial memory of superpower competition, have shown a similar resolve in the weight department. Last September the overseers of the Bolshoi Ballet dismissed the well-known ballerina Anastasia Volochkova on the grounds that "she is hard to lift."

In his book *The Control of Nature*, John McPhee described the dynamic of upthrust and erosion in the mountains of southern California. "The San Gabriels, in their state of tectonic youth, are rising as rapidly as any range on earth," he wrote, and then added, "Shedding, spalling, self-destructing, they are disintegrating at a rate that is also among the fastest in the world." Standards experience a similar dynamic.

The body dimensions of the original Barbie doll were such that if she

were life size, the critical measurements would be 38-18-34. But in 1998 Mattel introduced a revised doll, Really Rad Barbie, whose unofficial extrapolated dimensions were 36-24-34—a modest step toward a different ideal. A box of Crayola crayons once held a single crayon whose shade was designated "flesh"—roughly the color of a piglet after a warm bath. Now Crayola markets a whole box devoted entirely to flesh tones: peach, mahogany, sepia, burnt sienna—the full Benetton spectrum.

Some standards aren't worthy of the name in the first place, and in any event standards will always be in flux. But surely there are a handful on which we might all agree to hold the line—this far and no further, unto the end of days. To start this long-overdue public conversation, I'll propose ten.

I. "EMPLOYEES MUST WASH HANDS BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK" (*"Los empleados deben lavarse las manos antes de regresar al trabajo"*).

II. "Women and children first" (except maybe Ann Coulter).

III. *Notoriety* does not denote "famousness," *enormity* does not denote "bigness," and *religiosity* does not denote "religiousness."

IV. "The bat shall be a smooth, round stick not more than 2 3/4 inches in diameter at the thickest part and not more than 42 inches in length. The bat shall be one piece of solid wood."—official rules, Major League Baseball

V. "Honey, you look great!" (still the only correct answer).

VI. "Parents should never issue birth announcements or write letters of thanks that pretend to be coming directly from the baby."—Miss Manners

VII. "First, do no harm."—Hippocrates

VIII. The federal adulteration limits for cocoa powder ("75 or more insect fragments per 50 grams") and chocolate ("60 or more insect fragments per 100 grams").

IX. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."—the Golden Rule (worth a try?)

And finally,

X. Anything that does "little more for humanity than keep the publishing world afloat" deserves an award. **A**

*Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.*



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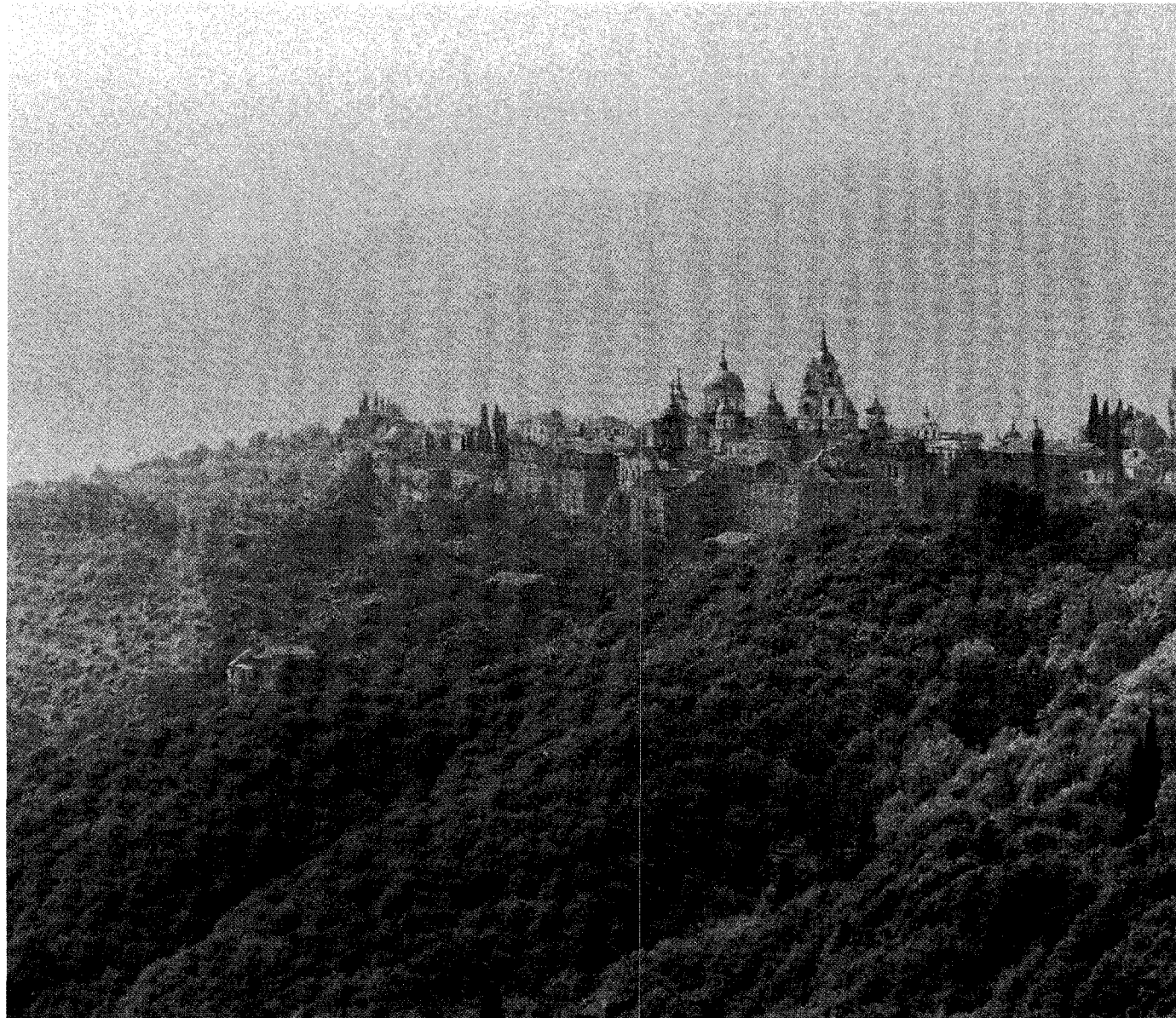
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TRAVELS

## THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

*Intimations of the geopolitical future in a place where time stands still*

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

.....

It was while visiting Mount Athos, more than a quarter of a century ago, that I first heard the Soviet Union would collapse—and would do so in my lifetime. There, in northeastern Greece one early-spring afternoon, two young Russian-American seminary students spoke to me of the greatness of the czars and the Russian Orthodox Church, and of how both the Romanov dynasty and the Orthodox Church were more legitimate than Leonid Brezhnev's Communist regime of the day. A time would come, they insisted, when the czar would again be revered in "Russia," as

they called it. I was both fascinated and mystified. Throughout my life I had been taught that the Soviet system, for all its cruelties, was nevertheless an improvement over the reactionary rule of the czars. Moreover, because the Cold War had been in progress since before I was born, I unconsciously assumed its permanence. But these seminary students spoke matter-of-factly about the fall of the Soviet Union, as if it would occur the following week. They provided no analysis, and little explanation. According to them, the matter was simple: because the Communist system

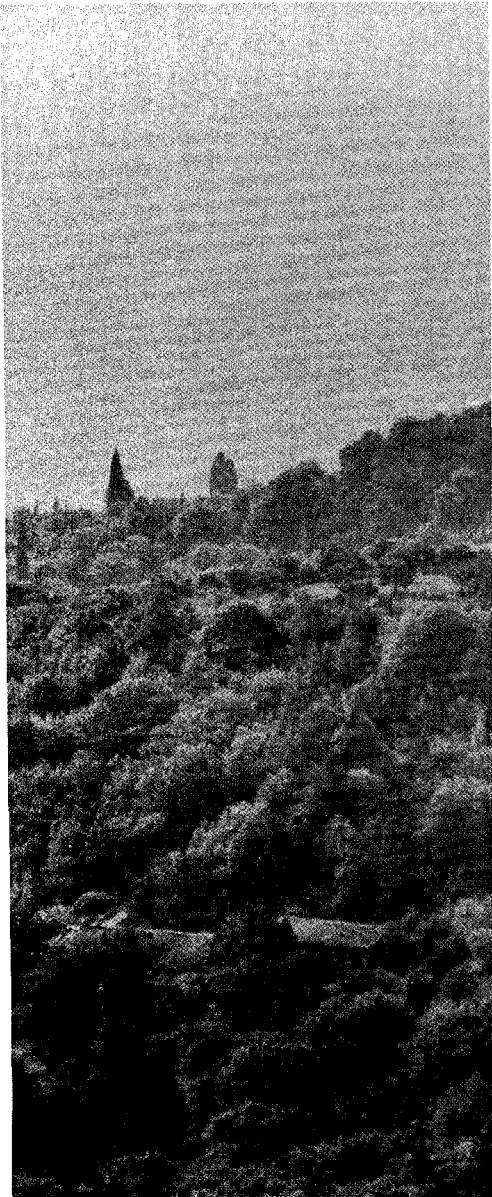
was godless, it had no moral legitimacy, and therefore Russia would necessarily be restored to its true self before long.

I attempted to argue, but they brushed me off good-naturedly with a few references to Russia's pre-Communist, Orthodox past. I liked them, but I did not believe them. Yet I believed my surroundings, where little seemed to have changed since the time of the Byzantine Empire—an era defined by the Eastern Orthodox Church, with all its passions and intrigues. My mind might disagree, but in this setting it was difficult for my heart to follow.

I thought about all this again when, not long after that encounter, I discovered Lawrence Durrell's *Bitter Lemons*, a travelogue about Cyprus in the 1950s, in which the author wrote of being castigated by a young Israeli journalist. "You English," the journalist said, "seem

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZBIGNIEW KOŠC





to ... be completely under the spell of the Greco-Roman period, and you judge everything without any reference to Byzantium. Nevertheless, that is where you find the true source of Greek thinking, Greek *moeurs*." A people's history molds a people's national character, which reasserts itself during times of change and conflict. My seminary-student acquaintances understood that beneath the carapace of communism Russia, like Greece, was an Eastern Orthodox nation.

A semi-autonomous religious community that encompasses all but a corner of the Athos Peninsula, Mount Athos is a place where Byzantine life and traditions have been preserved in their entirety by Greek legal decree. Women have been barred from Mount Athos for the past 1,000 years—even

female animals are discouraged. The monks still live according to the Julian calendar and the Byzantine clock: midnight coincides with the setting of the sun. On the "holy mountain," as its Greek name is translated, eight hours a day are spent in prayer, beginning at 8:00 A.M. Byzantine time (about 2:00 A.M. local time in the outside world, depending on the time of year). Only roads of sand connect the twenty monasteries on the thirty-mile-long peninsula, and some of the monks have lived alone for decades in cliffside caves. The Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Serbian monasteries on the holy mountain attest to the Byzantine Empire's cultural diversity.

On the Athos Peninsula one summer evening in 1927 two young Englishmen, Robert Byron and David Talbot Rice, sat on the steps of the guesthouse of the Serbian monastery of Chilandar, discussing the future of the novel. In his travel memoir of that summer, *The Station*, Byron wrote,

We agreed that if ever a great novel, to rank with Shakespeare, Velasquez, and Beethoven, could be written, it is now. Only now are we learning to probe the unreasoning machinery of the human mind. And now, for the first time, man holds the world in his palm, placed there by mechanised transport. It remains for an artist to leave posterity a picture, not of dialects or tribes, countries or continents, but of the globe of the twentieth century. For the longer the opportunity lasts, the less worth while will it be. Western civilisation is becoming universal, the race a homogeneous one. And before we die, half the variety of the picture will be gone.

Byron could also have been writing about the future of the travel book. Three quarters of a century later the world is still full of variety, with Western civilization only a veneer in many places. Nevertheless, it is true that the world is much more homogeneous now than it was in 1927, even though the means existed then to go almost anywhere (however slow and inconvenient the manner). Conditions for travel writing may have been more propitious then for another reason: the absence of television and other electronic distractions gave those armed with an education

more time to read and hone their intellects, allowing some of them to communicate their thoughts in a particularly exquisite language.

I first read *The Station* soon after my visit that early spring to Mount Athos. At the end of the book Byron explained the title. "This is the Holy Mountain Athos," he wrote, "station of a faith where all the years have stopped." Byron was twenty-two when he came to Mount Athos with his Eton friends Talbot Rice and Mark Ogilvie-Grant, in order to photograph the frescoes in the churches and monasteries. Because the larger purpose of the journey was to appreciate the art of the Byzantine Renaissance, the group traveled later in the year to the Byzantine fortress of Mistra, in the Peloponnese, and then to Crete, to see the landscape that had inspired El Greco. Byron believed that in Byzantine art lay the true origin of Western painting, with El Greco, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish artist of Cretan origin, providing the link.

*The Station* was a revelation to me. It is a travel book with a controversial thesis. Byron used the travel genre as a vehicle to argue that the legacy of eastern Byzantium is more important to the West than that of Greece and Rome. (He delineated this argument further in *The Birth of Western Painting*, co-authored with Talbot Rice.) His scholarship is occasionally questionable. His friend Christopher Sykes observed that the virtues Byron "discerns in Byzantium and denies to Latin Christendom" were "present in both in some degree, as were the vices." Byron seemed unaware that the "crude" anti-Byzantine stance of Edward Gibbon had already been abandoned by many scholars. As Sykes put it, Byron was a useful *vulgarisateur* who, through fresh and exciting writing, opened up difficult subjects to ordinary people who never would have known about them otherwise. Although the opinion I formed of the Byzantine Empire would turn out to be less benign than Byron's, *The Station* was what sharpened my interest in the subject.

In the book Byron indulged a gift for mordant observation. Here is his description of the food and sleeping arrangements on Mount Athos:

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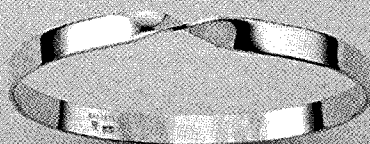


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Dinner arrived; and with it all the raw hideousness of the true Athosite meal ... the grime of cloth and napkins; spoons, knives and forks slimed with grease ... those unmentionable vegetables, resembling large cut nails and filled with pips tasting of stale pharmaceutical peppermint; and an omelette of whipped oil ... On approaching the beds, flocks of red bugs might be seen frolicking over the striped holland of cement mattresses. Fountains of blood—we wondered whose—squirting from their bodies as we pressed them flat like gooseberry skins.

Then there were the monks, their lives spent in isolation, "enquiring tenderly" after England's political state "as though of the health of a friend ... anxious to know if we were engaged in any war." There is the author's beautiful elegy on the Trapezuntine Empire, a little piece of Byzantium on the Black Sea, "negligible in area and void of political achievement," a "minor theme" that played out until 1461, eight years after the fall of Constantinople. There is his uninhibited comparison, upon entering a Russian monastery, of Greek and Slavic culture.

The environment was now as Slav as it had formerly been Greek. The fineness, the delicacy of Hellenism had given place to something more remote, less coherent. Flat-nosed Mongols and giant blonds passed by, "shck" and "kok" issuing from their lips in place of the familiar liquids.

Strong opinions everywhere cement the narrative. Byron berated the expensive American restoration of the Agora in Athens as providing "a pillared playground for cats," when for much less money many of the deteriorating icons on Mount Athos might have been saved. *The Station* radiates the passion of someone discovering a subject on his own and taking the reader along as he learns.

Because of its legally guaranteed semi-isolation, Mount Athos had probably changed less in the fifty years since Byron wrote *The Station* than almost any place I could have visited. Ouranopolis, the last port on the Athos Peninsula at which women are allowed, was in the mid-1970s still a sleepy town of dirt roads and whitewashed two-level

houses, with freshly painted green and sky-blue window frames. A few cafés and restaurants were lined up along a sandy beach, at the end of which was a fortified tower, the color of an olive stone, built early in the fourteenth century by the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus as a lookout against pirates. Bright-orange fishing boats rested on the water. At dawn, when I boarded a boat filled with monks and a few tourists bound for Mount Athos, fog was rising off the sea like smoke from a censer.

The boat passed rambling complexes of monasteries, their walls and roofs lit by the sun in splashy yellow shades. After several hours we docked at the tiny port of Daphni, on the peninsula's southern coast. I took a bus up a winding dirt road to Karyes, the only town on the holy mountain. Here Byron had found "an air of activity, almost gaiety," perhaps because he had just come from a monastery in a remoter part of the peninsula. As I had come directly from the outside world, I found Karyes, which means "walnut trees," to be a place of sleepy silence. It was a Byzantine and Victorian-Gothic concoction of lead-sheeted domes, broken slate, warped wooden planks, sagging roofs—all charming and seemingly on the verge of collapse. I remember a raised window that was held up by an empty olive-oil jar. The monks, in filthy, tattered black robes and cylindrical hats, were lugging oil jugs, flour sacks, and cooking-gas canisters on their shoulders. Their beards were unkempt. Many of the monks were missing teeth. The old ones brought to mind broken tree stumps. They all appeared famished. There was a sign:

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The walk from Karyes to the Greek monastery of Vatopedi, on the peninsula's northern coast, took two and a half hours. I made my way along a trail of wildflowers. The peak of Mount Athos, a snow-streaked triangle, loomed above like a giant shadow. Slate-gray boundary walls, massive lime-green trees, olive and cherry groves, and the clang of mule bells heralded Vatopedi, its roofs



coated with yellow lichen. Russian-style onion domes alternated with Italian-style campaniles.

Entering the monastery, I wandered alone among cavernous empty halls, where here and there was hidden a magnificent fresco or a little chapel. Dinner, which I took with the monks, consisted of stale bread, lentil-and-onion gruel, water, and apples. The meal wasn't filling, but neither was it quite as awful as one Byron described: "[cod] salted after it had rotted in the summer sun ... macaroni, embalmed in the juice of goats' udders curdled to a shrill sourness." The main church was a sulfury subterranean vault filled with icons

with a string. He looked at my shivering countenance and smiled, inviting me by way of pantomime to follow him outside, back into the rain, and then into one of the enormous monastery buildings—fantastical mansions, really—and up several creaking staircases. We emerged into a small heated kitchen. A cook barked orders to another monk, who was wearing torn clothes and an imbecilic expression. Soon I was served a cold meal of spinach gruel and sugared rice with Turkish coffee.

I looked around at the mansion, with its broken windows and sagging beams. How many occupants were here? I asked in broken Greek. Six, I

of the Russian Orthodox Church and the weakness of the Soviet regime.

As the years wore on, with Brezhnev's death, in 1982, leading to the infirm, indecisive reigns of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, and then to the regime-ending era of Mikhail Gorbachev, whose new breed of capitalist-trending authoritarianism toppled (albeit unwittingly) the Communist system, the conversation I'd had with the seminary students reverberated louder. Finally, in the 1990s, came the full-fledged return of the Orthodox Church to Russia, followed by the reburial and canonization of the last czar and czarina.

The professors and political analysts turned out to be wrong, and the two young Russian-Americans I had met on Mount Athos turned out to be right—only because they believed, and believed deeply and morally. History, I have learned, is often driven not by the smartest people but by those who are the most committed, and those who are the most committed are often not entirely rational. But what they lack in rationality they make up for in passion. Mount Athos was full of passion.

I parted from my two companions at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon, which on the eve of the Russian Revolution had boasted a population of 1,500 monks; in 1913 Rasputin had paid a visit. By the 1970s there were only a dozen monks there, pariahs in their ancestral land. Byron's observation of 1927 still rang true. "There is pathos," he wrote, "almost tragedy, in this deflation, in this remnant of a once overflowing community debarred from country and traditions—an outpost of old Russia in the Aegean."

Amid the icons, Corinthian columns, and candelabra, the twelve monks and the two young Russian-Americans sang loudly and intensely at the morning service, their voices compensating for the hundreds missing from here, who in spirit would return one day, sooner than I could have imagined. ▀

*Robert D. Kaplan is a correspondent for The Atlantic. This article is adapted from his book Mediterranean Winter: The Pleasures of History and Landscape in Tunisia, Sicily, Dalmatia, and Greece, to be published by Random House in February.*



and gold. In its puddles of darkness sonorous Orthodox chants seemed to be summoning Persephone back from the underworld.

The next morning I walked for another two and a half hours, this time to the Bulgarian monastery of Zographou, located in the interior. It was cold and raining hard. My shoes, socks, and pants became soaked. Finally I reached the monastery and made my way into its sanctuary. The iconostasis, inlaid with gold and silver, half obscured in clouds of sweet incense, reached to the ceiling like the entrance to a pagan temple. A monk with gold teeth and glazed Slavic features surprised me. His long, steely-blond hair was tied back

was told. Six monks, some of whom appeared only partly sane, to occupy this crumbling palace.

It was there, as I was finishing my lunch, that the two Russian-American seminary students appeared—the young men whose views on the Soviet Union would turn out to be so prescient. They had traveled from the United States to make a tour of Mount Athos. We fell easily into conversation, and I decided to walk with them to the Greek monasteries of Docheiariou and Xenophontos and the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon, all on the southern coast. As we walked, the weather cleared. And then, all of us warmed by the sun, they began to tell me their thoughts on the greatness



FOOD

## PRIDE OF PLACE

*Oregon's artisan Pinot Noir growers are the garagistes of the Pacific Northwest*

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Ten years ago I housesat for friends in the Napa Valley. They kindly left me a selection of their favorite wines of the moment, including several Napa wines available only by subscription—wines seldom seen in public, wines people connive and fight for.

Yet night after night I was drawn to a Pinot Noir that one of my hosts, Carl Doumani, a winemaker internationally celebrated for his Stags' Leap Petite Syrahs, had recently begun making in Oregon with a partner, Steve Girard. Called Benton-Lane, it was a deep strawberry red, with a whimsical, lovely postage-stamp label of the same color. The wine seemed to be the essence of grape, fruity and luscious, with an ex-

tremely full but not domineering flavor. It did not demand admiration; it simply went with whatever I cooked. Benton-Lane Pinot Noir became my default restaurant red when I wanted something very good that would not become a topic of conversation and yet would reveal a subtly different flavor with every taste. I look for all these qualities in food, too.

Last summer I visited the Willamette Valley, the heart of Oregon Pinot Noir country, and stayed in McMinnville (a seventy-five-minute drive southwest of Portland), home of the annually sold-out International Pinot Noir Celebration. There I found wine after local wine with that same mouth-filling flavor and a mysterious transparency—

as if the whole series of decisions that go into making wine had been reduced to revealing where the grapes grew.

Even more appealing was the frontier spirit. Oregon Pinot Noir has become well known in the wine world, of course—at least in the United States. But the region feels different from Napa, which I have visited at least once a year since the mid-1980s. The northern-California climate is perfect for grape production and for people, too, and Napa's proximity to San Francisco has for many decades kept land prices extremely high; Napa and Sonoma are the Hamptons of the Bay Area, but with world-class wines. Winemakers in Napa are likely to have been trained at the University of California at Davis and speak fluent technical jargon; vineyard owners are likely to talk about a love of wine, nurtured during restorative trips to Europe, and a dream of life lived according to the rhythms of nature that kept them going through the darkest days of stockbroking and orthodontia.

The winemakers I met in Oregon were a much more familiar type—full of the passion and near fanaticism that draws me to artisan cheesemakers and bakers and to farmers who raise heirloom breeds. I saw in them and their wine the same link to land and learning that guides great chefs and food makers. Oregon is still a haven for radical idealists who, like those other artisans, are fueled by stubborn eccentricity and a need to make the most of limited resources. (I couldn't help wondering, though, if the appealing characters I spoke with were neglecting to mention the families who had set them up in the simple life; free-spirited and iconoclastic California winemakers, I have found, usually descend from bankers or movie barons.)

Vineyard living is seductive. The close connection to natural cycles, the ability to produce something noteworthy resulting from decisions made during and after the growing season—it's as if gardeners could cook a great dish that combined everything they grew that summer, know it would last for years, and have the world admire and pay good money for it. Yet the wine business is notoriously expensive to enter and

JAMES NOEL SMITH



difficult to survive in. Could someone with abundant dreams and skill—and no money—start making and selling wine?

In talking with two particularly dedicated Oregon artisans—one just getting on his feet, the other the self-taught maker of a cult wine who after twenty years is acquiring grand-old-man status—and also with Carl Doumani, I found that the answer is a qualified yes. Making wine is very hard work, and in Oregon people are doing it themselves. They are the equivalent of the vaunted French *garagistes*—tiny, independent winemakers who shun the establishment yet manage to build dedicated followings.

The price of admission is several years of unpaid and constant labor; a second, paying job and/or a working spouse, and a sure sense of how to make wine. Many California winemakers talk up the farming aspect but have other people do it for them, as befits gentleman farmers. An aspiring *garagiste* must love the whole process: growing grapes, spending long hot days in a vineyard, and, of course, making decisive choices in the days after the grapes are crushed and before new wine goes into old barrels. Winemakers in Oregon share a goal: making delicious wine like the Pinot I bonded with, wine that makes you forget other kinds and lets you just enjoy drinking it. California winemakers would say that is their goal too. But almost every acre of prime California vineyard has for many years been beyond the grasp of dreamers.

Jimi Brooks dreams of owning his own vineyard in great Pinot Noir territory. In a few years he probably will. In the meantime, he is bottling his own wine and establishing his brand. Like other ambitious winemakers without money or property, Brooks is buying grapes and leasing land until he can afford his own. But, unlike most winemakers in the Willamette Valley, he grew up there and attended the picture-perfect Linfield College, in McMinnville. He didn't study winemaking, or even think much about it, until he lived abroad and supported himself by working in Beaujolais wineries. Once home, Brooks apprenticed with an experienced French winemak-

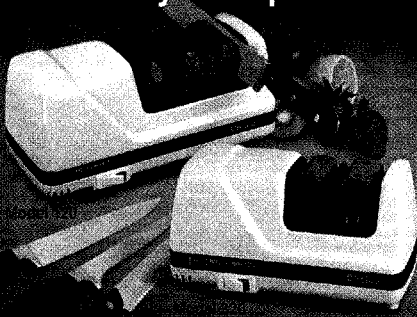
er, learning the tools of the trade on the job rather than at school.

Pinot Noir is a famously difficult grape. Its unpredictability (it mutates easily) and its potential for greatness are reasons why so many stubborn idealists want to grow it. Pinot Noir grows best in climates cooler and damper than those of Napa and Sonoma. In France it grows in the relatively northern region of Burgundy and in Champagne, even farther north, where it is one of the three classic grapes used for France's emblematic sparkling wine. Pinot Noir is thought to be closer to wild strains than most other cultivated wine-grape varieties. Its thin skin and relatively few seeds make for soft wines with a sweetness that is missing in other reds: tannins, the astringent substances in wine, are all in the skins and seeds. But its thin skin makes the grape particularly vulnerable to fungus if rains are heavy during the ripening season. To avoid the possibility of a ruined harvest, growers "drop crop" in mid-August, cutting off as many as half the fruit clusters so that fewer grapes will compete for nutrients, and so that the ones left will be ripe by late September or early October, when rains often come. This is an expensive form of insurance, and accounts for yields per acre typically half those in Napa, where the land can be relied on to produce smackingly powerful grapes year after year. (The most famous Napa red-wine grape is Cabernet Sauvignon, which in France grows in Bordeaux, southwest of Burgundy—an area with a climate closer to the Mediterranean one to which Napa's is always compared.) Cool-climate vineyard managers must be ruthlessly selective. But when Pinot Noir is great, it reveals like no other grape the soil and climate it grew in—the desideratum of all artisan-made food.

This direct expression of what the French call *terroir* is what wine lovers and especially winemakers love about Pinot Noir. The possibility of making great Burgundian wines in America inspired the founding fathers of Oregon Pinot Noir to try growing the grapes in the mid-1960s. David Lett, of Eyrie Vineyards, and Dick and Nancy Ponzi, of Ponzi Vineyards, were priced out of California but wanted to get back to the

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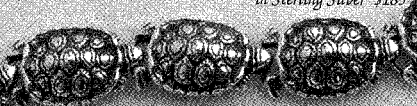
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land and lead the attractive winemaking life. They showed that Oregon Pinot Noir could compete favorably against Burgundy in blind tastings, as California Cabernet Sauvignon had done against Bordeaux. Maison Joseph Drouhin, a great Burgundy winemaker, put its stamp of approval on the Willamette Valley by buying land next to where Lett first planted Pinot Noir. A few big-money wine companies followed, and even the wine critic Robert Parker chose to buy his only winery, Beaux Frères, in the Willamette Valley (see "The Million-Dollar Nose," by William Langewiesche, December 2000 *Atlantic*).

A certain progression became familiar in Napa in the late 1970s and early 1980s, after Americans triumphed in blind tastings in France: first came French heavyweights, then rich amateurs (the Napa wine business is unsparingly

has taken him under his wing. Brooks pays for his winemaking bond and all separate expenses related to his own bottling, but he has free use of the Maysara processing equipment. And, of course, the farmers from whom he buys grapes pay all the costs of labor and equipment and land maintenance. Those farmers also give him grapes grown by the organic methods he favors.

Brooks can thus make mistakes at minimal expense; his first vintage, of 300 cases in 1998, cost him just \$4,000 to produce, he told me recently. He can also develop his own style and begin to acquire a reputation while saving up for land. It is land he hungers for. Like many *garagistes*, he thinks of himself more as a farmer than as a winemaker; if he can—as he puts it—buy himself out of self-imposed slavery, he hopes to crush his grapes and make them into

**I saw among Oregon winemakers the same link to land and learning that guides great chefs. Oregon is still a haven for radical idealists who share stubborn eccentricity and the need to make the most of limited resources.**

chronicled in James Conaway's *Napa*). Some of these sorts came to Oregon, too, but not many; and of those who came some left. Good Pinot Noir is much harder to make than good Cabernet Sauvignon; one late rain can mean a year's worth of watery wine. And then there is the rain that falls for most of the nine months after the growing season. The difficulty and especially the damp climate put off the kind of second-career retirees who flock to sunny California. Oregon remains largely the province of mavericks and radicals.

Good land is always the chief investment for any winemaker—the first thing rich dabblers buy, the last thing sweat-equity *garagistes* like Brooks invest in. The path he and numerous friends are following is to support themselves at established wineries that will allow them to make their own wine on the premises with grapes they buy—in effect establishing a winery within a winery. For instance, Brooks is the winemaker at Maysara Winery, where the Iranian vineyard owner, Mo Momtazi,

wine at a cooperative facility near the property he has his eye on. "I'm building a foundation," he kept saying—something he wants to pass on to his seven-year-old son, Pascal, who follows him around the vineyards and the winery, and even on sales calls to local restaurants.

The model for Brooks and many like-minded young Oregonians is John Paul, a colorful maverick with a big personality who makes some of the state's most admired Pinot Noirs at his Cameron Winery. Paul, a wiry, fine-featured man with energy to burn, trained as a microbiologist in southern California, where he was born; while doing postgraduate work in the Bay Area, he realized that he preferred helping friends near Napa to make wine. A tasting of 1976 Romanée-Contis, among the world's most sought-after Burgundies, hooked him for life.

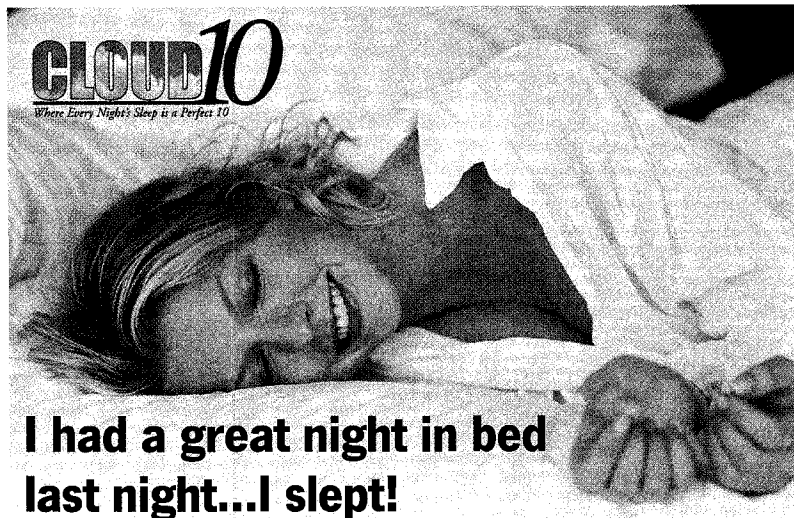
In the late 1970s Oregon Pinot Noirs had not established their pre-eminence, and Paul looked at the Anderson Valley, the Russian River Valley, and other cool-



climate territories near the Bay Area where he might plant Pinot Noir. Eventually, with the help of a loan from his mother (his father, an aeronautics engineer, was horrified, Paul says, that just on the verge of being able to get a real job he would throw away his education), he bought land near David Lett's Eyrie Vineyards. Lett was a hero of his who turned out to be a generous colleague and adviser. For three years Paul worked nearly full time on his first harvests; his young family lived on his wife's salary as a teacher, and his occasional earnings as an oceanographic consultant went into the winery. In the winery's fourth year he was able to pay himself a small salary.

Paul decided to keep his business very small, not only to keep control over every step of winemaking but also to avoid committing himself to the personnel costs that anything over 4,000 cases of wine a year—the size he calls magic—would require. Rather than look for a distributor, who would take a large share of the profits, Paul hand-sold his wines to Portland restaurants and wine stores. His approach, possible only with a production as limited as his, was so successful that other vintners were soon copying it.

It helped that national publications called Cameron's Pinot Noirs among the country's purest expressions of *terroir*. Paul's force of personality and jokiness helped too. He calls one of his vineyards Clos Electrique, for the electric fence surrounding it, and doesn't miss a chance to dress in drag for various editions of his newsletter, which at its best has *Onion*-y humor and at its worst is college-boy jejune. (You can find a sampling at [cameronwinery.com](http://cameronwinery.com); like all offbeat winery newsletters, it takes its cue from the limitless erudition and wit of Randall Grahm, the founder of Bonny Doon, in California.) An annual sellout is his Camerone Vino Pinko (his three Camerone wines are based on the white wines of Friuli, in northern Italy), a pale rosé that is pink-gray from the amount of dark grape skins left in. Vin gris, as the French call it, is an interesting cross between white and red wine; Randall Grahm sells a version he calls Pink Wine. Paul had the



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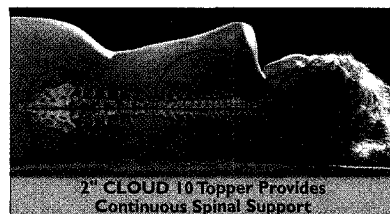
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genius to put an iconic engraving of Che Guevara on the label, and Portland wine shops can't get enough of it.

Brooks found his first job through Paul, and has taken a great deal of advice from him. He, too, plans to keep his production below 4,000 cases a year, and to use distributors and salesmen as little as possible. He can thus avoid the terrible tangle of national distribution, which means coping with fifty different sets of regulations. Brooks has also taken a cue from Paul's marketing whimsy, naming an inexpensive Pinot blend Runaway Red, after a barrel that fell off a truck and rolled into a stream, where the bung was miraculously jammed in place and all the wine survived. The orange-red label has a large picture of Trotsky—in honor, Brooks says, of Trotsky's flight to Mexico. Like *Vino Pinko*, it sells out.

A few successful gimmicks and good reviews are essential to small producers if they are to get the high prices they need to charge for their Pinot Noirs. Paul asks \$30 to \$40 a bottle for his high-end *Clos Electrique* and *Abbey Ridge*, Brooks \$30 for his top-of-the-line *Janus*. These are standard prices in Oregon, and loyalists are happy to pay them for wines like Paul's and Brooks's.

Or loyalists pay for futures, at convivial open-winery events that take place on Thanksgiving weekend. Many small winemakers have no space or staff for salesrooms, so they open once a year, giving barrel tastings of new wines and selling cases at a 30 to 40 percent discount. Local enthusiasts get to form and keep up acquaintances with winemakers they admire (another cult favorite is Felix Madrid, of *Carlo & Julian*, named for his twin sons), and winemakers get interest-free loans for two or three years. Invariably, Paul told me, someone will drive up to his Thanksgiving open house in a large, late-model Mercedes, buy several cases of ready-to-drink wine (he doesn't sell futures), and say, "Gosh, I envy you; I'd like to do this." "They have no idea!" Paul said. "They don't know what I went through to get to the point where I could take their eight hundred dollars and carry a box of wine out and shove it in the trunk of their car. I say, 'You'd rather drink it, trust me.'"

**B**enton-Lane Pinot Noir costs \$18 a bottle, a price that has remained steady and is made possible by economies of scale. Carl Doumani and Steve Girard were both successful Napa vintners and had ready access to credit. They bought enough Oregon land at the outset (farther south in the Willamette Valley, between Eugene and Corvallis) to grow grapes for 25,000 cases a year, an output that obliges them to keep a staff of nine full-time employees.

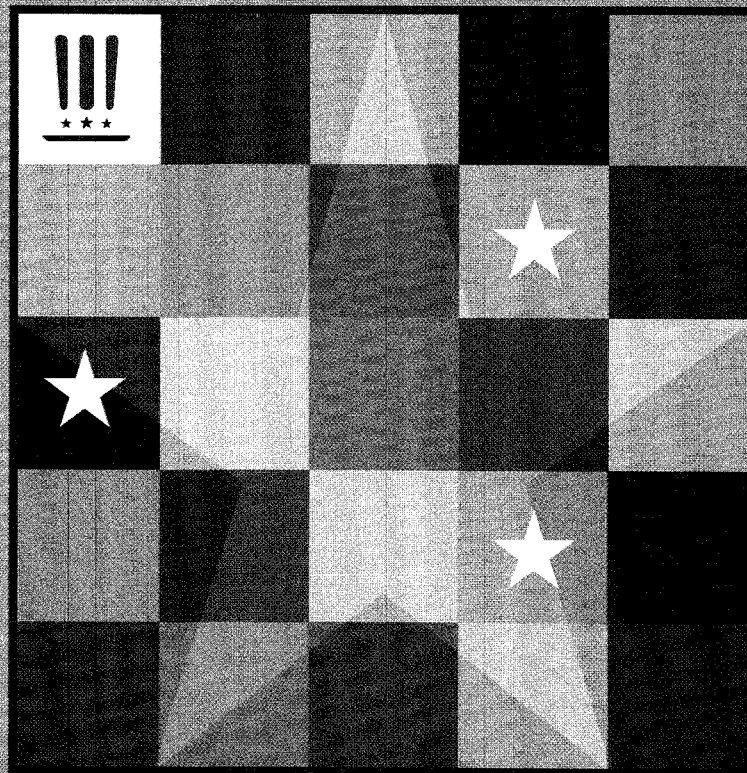
I asked Doumani if someone with Brooks's expertise and lack of capital could get started in Napa today. Having spent the past few years building a Napa winery, *Quixote*, that he expects will produce 4,000 cases a year, he was in a position to compare. Good land in Oregon, he told me, costs \$10,000 to \$12,000 an acre. Good land in Napa costs at least \$80,000 an acre and usually more than \$100,000. Building costs in Oregon, Doumani said, are exactly half what they are in Napa. Equipment and labor costs are equivalent. But official attitudes are not: Napa has for ten years been anti-development, placing wineries high on its suspect list. When Girard first moved to Oregon, city officials and even the governor asked what they could do to make things easier for him and Doumani in opening the winery, and then took steps to help. Doumani gave me as an example the cost of permits. All told, usage permits for Benton-Lane cost \$1,600. Permits for a Napa winery of the same size would cost \$26,000.

Despite strong sales for nearly fifteen years, the founders of Benton-Lane are still paying off their initial loans. So far Brooks is incurring as little debt as possible and paying it off before he increases his production, which he will do in 500-case increments. He can't afford debt, and he knows that success will never bring him riches. "What interests me," he said, "is my own sense of place and having something to pass on to my family." Pinot Noir lovers can benefit from his and Paul's devotion to place. No other wine, after all, tastes so clearly of where the grapes grew. **A**

*Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic and the author of the recently revised The Joy of Coffee.*



# SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS



# 2003

An Awards Program  
of *Government Executive*, *National Journal*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*  
and the Partnership for Public Service





## THE 2003 SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS

# THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

**T**he careers and achievements of the men and women profiled in this supplement offer compelling evidence that work in government offers challenges that find no parallel in the private sector. These winners of the second annual Service to America Medals all have dealt with problems of fascinating dimension whose solutions are of great importance to our national welfare.

A new appreciation for government is abroad in the land, arising principally from the pressing challenges the nation faces in the international arena. Terrorism, the war in Iraq, and troubles in the Middle East and in Europe are front-page news every day, and more Americans now know that their security depends on compatriots working in defense, diplomacy, and intelligence occupations of the federal government.

Still, it remains a challenge to interest people—especially young people raised in the go-go private economy of the past two decades—in government service. Government needs soldiers, sailors, and airmen, diplomats and spooks, but it also needs lawyers, accountants, doctors, financial analysts, trade specialists, and many, many others. And so, it can be said, government needs a makeover, a face-lift, to improve its public image and to shed the stereotypes that depress interest in working for Uncle Sam.

This is one objective of the SAM program, which was created last year in a partnership between the magazines of the Atlantic Media Co. and the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing the federal workforce. We wanted to celebrate the best in the federal service by honoring people doing interesting work and doing it well. And we wanted to publicize their stories. This supplement will be received by more than the 400,000 subscribers to our magazines—*The Atlantic Monthly*, *Government Executive*, and *National Journal*.

The pages that follow profile this year's award winners, whose achievements span the great range of issues the people of government confront. The winners include:

- Stephen McHale, who was assigned the job of creating a new 59,000-person agency, the Transportation Security Administration, charged with a vital mission in thwarting terrorism.
- James Bagian, a former astronaut who set out to invent a new system for improving the safety of patients in medical facilities.

- Alyson McFarland, who at the tender age of twenty-eight played an important role in a diplomatic crisis involving North Korean refugees.

- Paul Polski, an engineer whose federal laboratory developed explosive-detection technology—and who now is leading deployment of the machines in the nation's airports.

- Riaz Awan, who was sent to the Ukraine to oversee construction of a \$768 million sarcophagus to prevent more radiation leaks from the damaged Chernobyl nuclear reactor.

- Earl Stockdale, the army's top environmental lawyer, who is constructing the legal framework for the largest environmental restoration program ever undertaken—in Florida's Everglades.

- Denise Johnson, who for fifteen years has led America's effort to eliminate polio from the world.

- Ed Needham, who headed the team whose investigative work led to arrest of the "Lackawanna Six," a cell of al Qaeda partisans in upstate New York.

- Nelson Hernandez, who invented and now runs Money Smart, a program teaching low-income adults about using basic financial services.

This year's winners will be honored at a black-tie gala at Washington's National Building Museum. Cabinet members, members of Congress, figures from the entertainment world, and the national news media will be on hand to see them receive their medals.

Last year's winners were celebrated in their agencies and communities. Some of their stories were of interest to the national media as well. The poignant story of the long, tough investigation of the 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing by two FBI agents was one such case, for it brought to justice the men whose criminal actions killed four little girls.

By seeking justice in this case, Ben Herren and Bill Fleming made a big difference in the lives of the people so grievously harmed by the Birmingham bombing—as the father of one of the girls attested during last year's awards ceremony. This year's winners, too, have made a big difference in the life of our nation, quietly doing work essential to the public welfare.

Timothy B. Clark  
Editor, *Government Executive*





## THE 2003 SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS

# THE AWARDS

**T**his supplement celebrating winners of the Service to America Medals was produced by the reporters and editors of *Government Executive* magazine, a publication of the National Journal Group.

The medals program recognizes commitment to public service and career achievements in the federal service. Medalists were chosen from among twenty-eight finalists out of a field of close to 400 nominees. Final decisions were made by a group of national leaders.

Following is a description of the medal categories.

### FEDERAL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Honors the best and brightest of the federal workforce and comes with a \$10,000 award.

### CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

Recognizes lifetime achievement in public service by an employee with at least twenty years of service. The award is \$10,000.

### CALL TO SERVICE

Goes to a recent entrant to the federal workforce who has made a significant contribution to the country. The award is \$5,000.

### SERVICE TO AMERICA

Each accompanied by a \$3,000 award, these medals recognize accomplishments in specific fields of federal service:

#### ■ Homeland Security

Includes law enforcement, intelligence, transportation security, and emergency preparedness.

#### ■ National Security and International Affairs

Includes intelligence, defense, and diplomacy.

#### ■ Environment, Science, and Technology

Includes resource preservation, wildlife protection, space, and biomedicine.

#### ■ Social Services

Includes education, health care, and community development and assistance programs.

#### ■ Justice

Includes law enforcement, criminal justice, and civil rights.

#### ■ Business and Commerce

Includes economics, trade, small business assistance, finance, and information technology.

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## Federal Employee of the Year

# HIGH FLIER

After terrorists attacked the country, **Stephen McHale** took on one of the toughest security challenges in government

By Katherine McIntire Peters

In the summer of 2001, Stephen McHale, then the Treasury Department's assistant general counsel for enforcement, was thinking about leaving the federal government. After more than twenty years as a government lawyer, McHale thought he had exhausted his career possibilities in public service.

"I was thinking that maybe it was time to leave and do something different," he says.

The opportunity to do that came a short time later when terrorists hijacked four commercial jets on September 11, launching the deadliest terrorist attack ever on American soil. McHale soon found new urgency in his work at the Treasury Department as he focused on unraveling terrorism financing schemes. In late December, he got a call from his old friend and colleague John Magaw, who was then acting executive director of the Federal Emergency Management agency. The two had worked together at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in the late 1990s, where McHale had been chief counsel and Magaw was director. Magaw had just been tapped for the top security job at the Transportation Department, where he was charged with creating a new agency aimed at foiling terrorist attacks. Magaw wanted McHale to help him create the new Transportation Security Administration.

"Suddenly, I had this opportunity to be on the ground floor of a government startup," says McHale. He called friends and

asked for their advice. Consistently, they told him it was an impossible job because Congress, in crafting the legislation that created the Transportation Security Administration, had placed impossible demands on the agency before it even had any personnel. "I thought about it over the weekend. I called John back on Monday and said, 'When do you want me to start?' He said, 'Tomorrow.'"

### Sleepless Nights

Michael Jackson, then the Transportation Department's deputy secretary, says the pressures on Magaw and McHale were enormous. "We had midnight meetings, problems we didn't know how to solve, and crushing deadlines," he says. At the same time, ongoing intelligence reports raised fears of repeat hijackings. "We didn't really know what else was locked and loaded in the al Qaeda system to throw at the aviation system. We knew the al Qaeda operational mandate was to attack at one thing and then go back at that same thing," says Jackson, now retired.

"A huge amount of responsibility fell on Steve, and he handled it extraordinarily well," says Magaw. The challenges ranged from quickly hiring tens of thousands of employees to equipping hundreds of airports with millions of dollars' worth of high-tech screening equipment. When TSA was created, there were only thirty-two air marshals in the country, private contractors managed airport security, and most baggage

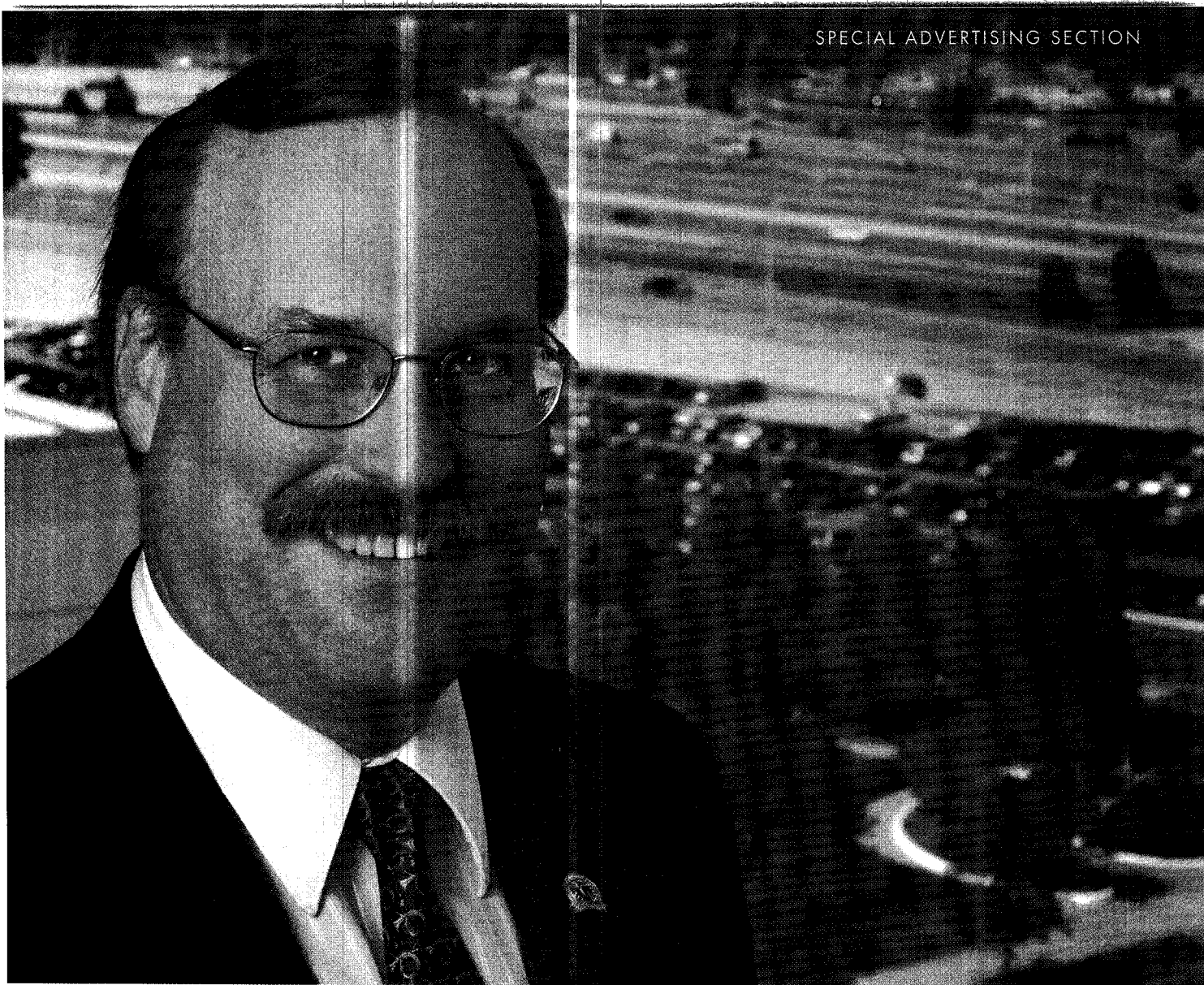
went unscreened. In addition, a year after TSA was created, it was moved from the Transportation Department into the new Homeland Security Department, causing more headaches for senior managers.

Almost immediately, in December 2001, Magaw and McHale set about assembling a senior leadership team, expanding the federal air marshal program, creating federal passenger and baggage screening requirements, and hiring staff to fulfill those requirements. "[The terrorists'] primary goal was to destroy our way of life," says McHale. "Fundamental to that way of life is our freedom of movement. Our job was to get people in place as quickly as possible—quality people—and put them around the country throughout the aviation system, to restore confidence. That was the driving force."

In the frantic push to get that done, they took risks, he says. "We found ourselves in March and April [of 2002] engaging in massive contract awards in administration without any infrastructure to support it. The Transportation Department tried to lend a hand ... but we overstressed their system too." TSA relied on the Defense Department for some contract management support, but Defense had its hands full prosecuting wars in Afghanistan and later Iraq.

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"What we didn't have in place was enough people who could do detailed contract oversight—program managers. We were hiring 55,000 screeners and we didn't have enough supervisors. We were awarding billions of dollars in contracts, but we didn't have enough program managers," he says.

McHale says TSA now has a robust contract management capacity, but continues to clean up problems that stem from that early surge. "It was one of the many things that would keep you awake at night—knowing how much was going on out there and how much you were relying on people to do the right thing."

To keep employees at the nation's 429 airports focused on the mission, the agency has developed a very aggressive covert testing program, in which teams of undercover security specialists probe airports attempting to circumvent security. The teams' findings are incorporated into training programs and provide continual feedback to both

agency leaders and to the federal security directors at the nation's airports.

### Unfinished Business

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, few issues received as much scrutiny in the news media and on Capitol Hill as aviation security. Not surprisingly, there have been many painful moments for those involved in creating TSA. Personnel turnover, especially among airport security directors, cost overruns, and continued security breaches at airports have drawn criticism. Last year, Magaw was forced to resign after lawmakers and administration officials lost confidence in him. His replacement, former Coast Guard commandant James Loy, has had a warmer reception on Capitol Hill, but he hasn't escaped criticism for some of the agency's shortcomings.

What Loy and Magaw have in common is enormous respect for McHale. Loy, who nominated McHale for the Service to Amer-

ica Medal, lauded his extraordinary talent and the personal example he sets for his colleagues. (McHale's sister, Judith McHale, is on the Service to America Medal's 2003 selection committee.)

Now deputy administrator at TSA, McHale is proud of how far the agency has come in less than two years.

"When you have a brand-new agency like this, nobody really knows what it is, or what it's going to be. If you go to work for the FBI, you have a sense of mission, of corporate culture. You know what it does and is expected to do every day. When people came to work for TSA, they all came with their own idea of what the organization could and should be," he says.

TSA's job will never be done, McHale says. "The threat is constantly changing. We've only recently started turning to the nonaviation areas [of transportation security], and we haven't completed the work in the aviation area."





## Career Achievement

# SAFETY FIRST

Whether in space or in the operating room, James Bagian is committed to eliminating deadly mistakes

By Matthew Weinstock

**D**r. James Bagian found himself in disturbingly familiar territory in February, when he was called on to help investigate the loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*. It had been seventeen years since Bagian dove ninety-five feet into the Atlantic Ocean to find the remains of friends and colleagues who perished aboard the shuttle *Challenger*.

This time around, there were no blue waters to search. But Bagian's mission was the same: view the evidence, analyze the data, figure out what went wrong, and, most importantly, help NASA determine how to prevent such a tragedy from ever occurring again.

It's what Bagian does. It's what he has done his entire federal career. From redesigning ejection seats on navy fighter jets to reduce injuries to his current work of eliminating medical mishaps at Veterans Affairs Department hospitals, Bagian has focused on one thing—creating a culture of safety.

That wasn't always his plan, though. "When I was eight years old, as a Cub Scout, we had to make a scrapbook about something," Bagian, fifty-one, says. "I did mine on the space program. That was when [Alan] Shepard was the first person to fly into space. I knew I wanted to be an astronaut." But three years later, Bagian relinquished the dream, momentarily. "I was twelve. I thought no one actually gets to be an astronaut. Look at

how many people are in the U.S. Look at how few astronauts there are."

Instead, Bagian, who grew up in Philadelphia, the son of a World War II fighter pilot, opted to study engineering, because he was attracted to the problem-solving aspect of the field. He earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Drexel University in his hometown. But after apprenticing for various companies during his studies, Bagian was discouraged by the fact that seniority played a large role in how people were promoted.

Bagian looked for a profession where he could become master of his destiny, and settled on medicine. Upon completing his engineering studies in 1973, he enrolled at Thomas Jefferson University, also in Philadelphia, to pursue a medical degree. Before classes started, he spent the summer earning a pilot's license.

Throughout his career in government, Bagian has found ways to put his unusual combination of engineering and medical degrees to use. One of the earliest examples came while he was working as an engineer at the U.S. Naval Test Center in Patuxent River, Maryland, in 1976. Bagian, who was still in medical school at the time, learned that one-third of pilots who ejected from fighter planes suffered fractured vertebrae. He realized that the problem was the jerk of acceleration pilots experienced when they first ejected. He devised a new system to slow the rate of acceleration while still providing a safe exit. The system is standard in navy jets and has dramatically reduced injuries.

Yet Bagian couldn't fight the urge for space travel. He applied to become an astronaut in 1976. He didn't hear anything for about a year. Then, while completing rounds one June night in 1977 at Geisinger Medical Center, in Danville, Pennsylvania, his beeper sounded. It was NASA. He was one of twenty people chosen that year to be astronauts.

Bagian was set to fulfill his childhood dream in 1987, when he was named to serve on the crew of the *Challenger* to perform a scientific mission. But five months before the scheduled launch, NASA shifted priorities and decided to go with a crew trained to deploy a satellite. As the *Challenger* lifted off, Bagian sat in the NASA command center, serving as the flight medical officer.

When the shuttle exploded just over a minute after launch, Bagian, a trained diver, was among the group of people sent out to search for survivors.

During the ensuing investigation, Bagian was instrumental in pushing for new safety measures. Most notably, he led the effort to redesign the shuttle's crew cabin to include an escape hatch. Using his engineering skills and knowledge as a physician, he developed pressure suits and parachutes that would allow future astronauts to float to Earth safely from a high altitude.

Unfortunately, *Columbia's* crew did not have time to use the escape hatch. But Bagian,

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who served on the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board, says he hopes NASA will consider improving the “skin” of the crew cabin in the shuttles, so that the cab could withstand the heat of reentry to the Earth’s atmosphere. That way the crew could use the escape hatch once the module reached a lower altitude.

For all of the publicity and high drama that comes with working on the space shuttle, Bagian says the most important challenge of his career came in 1998, when he agreed to head the National Center for Patient Safety at the Veterans Affairs Department. His assignment was daunting—completely overhaul the culture at VA medical centers to make patient safety the top priority. Minimizing errors in treatment has long been a source of frustration in the medical community, because of a culture that has tended to focus on blame rather than problem-solving. As a result, many health care professionals are loath to point out mistakes or near misses.

The issue reached a critical point in 1999 when the Institute of Medicine released a

study estimating that between 44,000 and 98,000 Americans die annually from preventable medical mistakes. The institute recommended that the government and hospitals create a system to report and track errors.

The VA was already looking for ways to improve safety. Under the leadership of Veterans Health Administration chief Kenneth Kizer and, later, Thomas Garthwaite, the agency developed a patient safety program in 1997. But it lacked a point person for more than a year. Finally, Kizer asked Bagian to take the helm and, in 1999, turned the program into a permanent part of the VA, creating the National Center for Patient Safety.

In Bagian, the VA found someone who would become the driving force for patient safety. The center encourages VA health care professionals to report errors and near misses. More importantly, though, it requires them to figure out where and why communication breakdowns result in errors.

The approach is paying dividends. Between January and August of this year, the VA had yet to record an incident of incorrect

surgery—in which the wrong patient is operated on or the wrong surgery is performed on a patient. In prior years, the VA’s 170-plus hospitals usually would have experienced at least eight incorrect surgeries during that time span. The VA also has led the field in developing new coding systems to ensure that drugs are distributed appropriately.

Garthwaite credits Bagian with the center’s success. “James is contagious and infectious,” he says. “He is so down-to-earth. When he talks about the specifics, things just come to life.”

Bagian is forging a partnership with private hospitals, hoping to bring them along on his quest for quality. Don Nielsen, senior vice president of quality at the American Hospital Association, says Bagian walked into a difficult situation and immediately put people at ease. He helped the health care community rally around a simple goal: Do no harm to the patient.

“I took this job because it was the right thing to do,” Bagian says. “It’s been the most satisfying thing I have ever done.”



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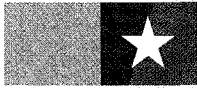
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## Call to Service



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# FOREIGN SERVICE

When three North Koreans sought refuge at a U.S. consulate in China, **Alyson McFarland** was the first to hear their case

**A**lyson McFarland was sitting in a staff meeting at the U.S. consulate in Shenyang, China, last summer speculating with colleagues about what they would do if North Korean defectors sought refuge there. Within minutes, someone came running through the office, saying three North Koreans had jumped over the wall surrounding the consulate.

She had been at the consulate for less than a week, beginning work in a four-month assignment as acting political officer and acting public affairs officer. But as the only Korean speaker on the staff, McFarland was vaulted into a diplomatic crisis. "It was so strange, because we had just been talking about that very thing happening," she says. It was also one of the most exciting experiences of her young career. Because North Korea is such a secretive nation, few Americans have any experience dealing with its citizens. McFarland was thrilled to have the opportunity to debrief the defectors and get to know them. "It was an incredible experience to be able to talk to them, especially after they relaxed and realized we weren't going to throw them out," she says. The refugees were in the

compound for several days, under twenty-four-hour watch, while the crisis was resolved. Then twenty-eight, McFarland impressed her colleagues with skill and grace beyond her years.

"The issue of North Korean refugees in China was one of the highest-profile foreign policy issues the United States dealt with during the summer of 2002," says Mark Kennon, the U.S. consul general in Shenyang, in an e-mail. "[McFarland's] participation was key to resolving an issue that created headlines around the world and which occupied the highest-level U.S., Chinese, and South Korean leaders for weeks," he says.

McFarland's enthusiasm for her work was evident in other ways. She traveled extensively along the border area between China and North Korea, taking photographs and interviewing government officials and other regional observers about subjects such as trade and the flow of refugees from North Korea into China, to provide Washington policymakers with greater insight into the region.

Growing up in Greene, New York, McFarland didn't have much experience with foreign cultures, and she felt compelled to see more of the world. "I knew I wanted to travel and study other cultures," she says. When she applied for a foreign exchange program in high school, she was selected to study Japanese, sparking her interest in Asia. She also studied Korean and traveled extensively in Japan and South Korea as a student, first while she was at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, where she earned a bachelor's degree, and later while a student at the University of Hawaii, where she earned a master's degree in Asian studies.

"I think the most important skill is to be able to just listen," says McFarland, who now works as a program development officer in the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy. When she won a coveted position as a presidential management intern in 2000 at State following graduate school, she knew she had found her professional home, she says. In just three years at State, McFarland, now twenty-nine, already has made an impression. Joseph McGinnis, a former supervisor of McFarland's when she worked on arms control issues in an early assignment at State, describes her as "a take-charge sort of person who wants to demonstrate her abilities in a way that contributes to the good of the nation."

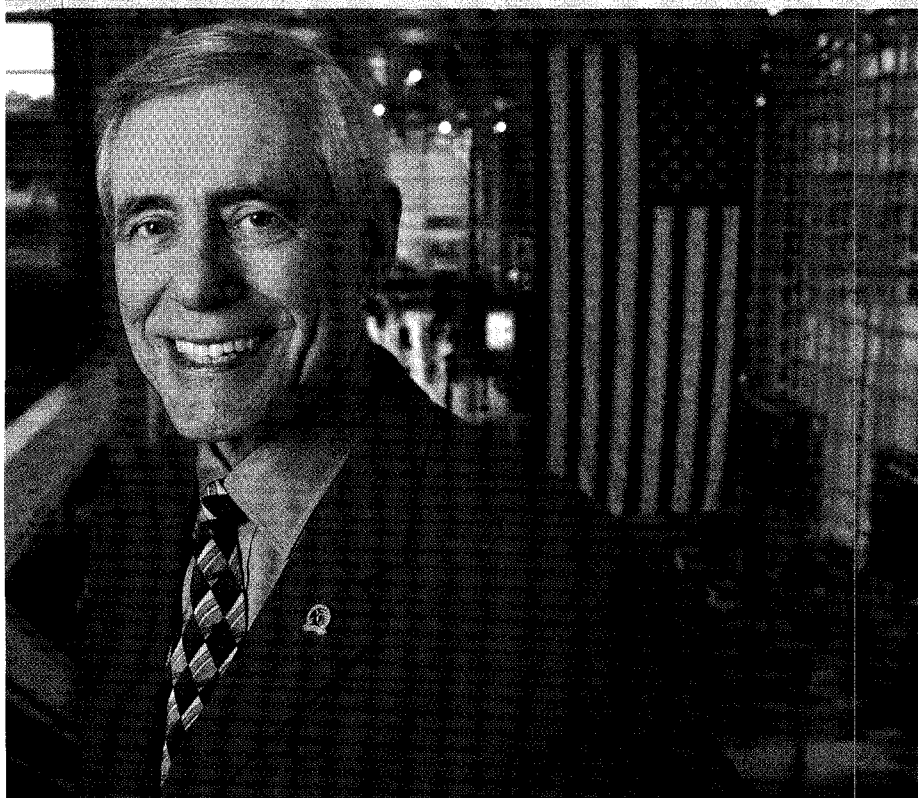
Kennon, McFarland's supervisor in Shenyang, says she is a true team player. "She can lead and she can follow, as need be. I would like to have her on my team again, any time."

By Katherine McIntire Peters





## Homeland Security



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### AIR WARRIOR

**Paul Polski's lab developed explosive-detection devices long before the war on terrorism was declared. Now at TSA, he's working to get them into airports**

By Shane Harris

**P**aul Polski understands genius—both benevolent and evil.

For ten years, Polski directed a team of eighty scientists at the Federal Aviation Administration's Security Research and Development Lab. Known as the "green berets of science," they stood at the vanguard of the war on terrorism, years before it was declared.

The security lab was established following the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in December 1988 over the village of Lockerbie, Scotland. Under Polski's guidance, the lab produced three dozen devices to minimize damage from an explosion aboard an airplane and to thwart terrorists trying to sneak bombs on board in the first place. Among the lab's greatest achievements was certifying the first explosive-detection system, which senses objects inside luggage. It advanced the field of security the way the telescope forever altered astronomy.

Such a detector probably could have saved the 259 souls aboard Pan Am 103 and the eleven more on the ground. Polski knows it. In fact, it haunts him.

He recalls details of the attack, perpetrated by Libyan government agents, with obsessive precision. It took twelve to fourteen ounces of plastic explosive

to rip a hole in the fuselage of the jumbo jet, which then tore apart midflight, Polski explains. The small bomb was hidden inside a portable stereo. "A Toshiba Bomb Blast stereo," Polski notes, pausing to emphasize the terrible irony of the brand name.

Preventing another Pan Am 103 became Polski's passion. The Naval Academy graduate, who flew combat missions in Vietnam, eschewed the spotlight-loving life of a fighter ace for the admiral-like role of manager. Polski had completed a master's degree in engineering management in 1971, and the lab gave him a chance to build a team and tackle a national problem.

The early days weren't easy. "He started with nobody," says Susan Hallowell, who worked in the lab. But "he brought the right people together ... It was Paul's vision to put together this office."

As the team succeeded, Polski reflected their success. "He glowed brighter when others did," says Lee Spanier, another lab employee.

The lab, which now sits in the Homeland Security Department, has had unquestionable success. But Polski's career is marked with a tragic epilogue. The downing of Pan Am 103 didn't compel airlines to implement the devices Polski's gurus had birthed. In the nearly thirteen years between the crash and the September 11 attacks—which prompted a law requiring explosive screening of all passenger luggage—terrorists bombed three more airplanes, claiming 285 lives.

Polski says a "creeping complacency" settled in following those bombings. The airlines never purchased the security devices, because the law never forced them to, he says.

Just as now, the airlines protested that paying billions for extra security could sink the financially faltering industry. The government stepped in to fund additional measures, but they weren't enough to get a full program off the ground.

Yet there is hardly a trace of bitterness in Polski as he recounts the tortured saga. He handles grief in his own way, attending annual memorials to the victims of Pan Am 103. And he marches on professionally. Now he is the chief of staff to the chief technology officer at the Transportation Security Administration, helping lead the multi-billion-dollar deployment of explosive-detection systems—the same devices his lab developed—to more than 400 airports across the country.

Polski reflects on the slow-going years and is glad that work is finally getting done. But ever the observer of human behavior, he knows it's human nature to react only when assailed. His crusade has been characterized by a harsh truth, he says. "The money follows the blood."





## National Security and International Affairs



NIKOLA LUBCHENKO

# POWER HITTER

With TV images of the Chernobyl disaster frozen in his memory, **Riaz Awan** is driven to erase nuclear risks as one of the government's leading energy experts

**T**he 110-mile round trip from the U.S. embassy in Kiev over crumbling Soviet-era roadways to the nuclear ghost town of Chernobyl can take more than three hours and be as harsh as a Ukrainian winter. But for Riaz Awan, the periodic commute is no more challenging than the journey he's taken from a dusty village in Pakistan to become one of the United States's top experts on nuclear security.

Awan, forty-eight, a soft-spoken government engineer for the Energy Department, grew up without electricity on a farm in Pakistan, where his family raised cattle and grew cotton and wheat. As a twelve-year-old, he scored high on a nationwide test and qualified for entry into one of the nation's elite military academies. After graduating, he returned to his family's farm, but quickly realized the agrarian life was not for him. At twenty-two, he left his homeland to attend Catholic University in Washington.

"Ever since I was six years old I had wanted to go to the United States," says Awan, who recalls learning about America by listening to news reports on a transistor radio with his father.

After earning a degree in mechanical engi-

neering, Awan worked for various government contractors designing and testing nuclear power plants across the United States. In 1986, he saw television reports of firefighters responding to the explosion of a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl, which killed thirty people instantly and set off fears of a nuclear holocaust. "It reinforced my belief that I wanted to work with nuclear power to make it safe," he says.

A decade later, after leaving the private sector to manage nuclear programs for the Energy Department, Awan found himself making regular trips to the site he'd seen on TV to work on the cleanup. By 1999, Awan, his wife, and their three daughters had relocated to Slavutych, Ukraine, the closest town to Chernobyl. He became Energy's point man for overseeing the safe and permanent closure of the plant, which had been delayed by the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

"Riaz is the go-to guy on nuclear security," says Necia Quest, Awan's supervisor at the U.S. embassy in Kiev.

Key to the cleanup is building a \$768 million concrete shelter over the reactor to prevent any radiation leaks from the site for the next 100 years. Standing taller than the Statue of Liberty and measuring hundreds of feet in length and width, the so-called sarcophagus is one of the most daunting engineering projects ever undertaken. Not only has Awan been coordinating the construction, but he's also held together the twenty-six donors, ranging from the United States to the European Commission, who will foot the bill. The protective shield will be built within the next five years.

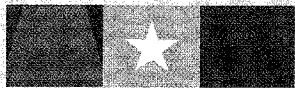
In 2001, Awan moved to Kiev, where his expanded responsibilities include the nuclear non-proliferation program as the U.S. energy attaché in Ukraine. Like many of the former Soviet states, Ukraine has many sources of radiological materials, including thirteen active nuclear reactors, which could provide the ingredients for building dirty bombs. Awan helped draft security plans for protecting the facilities that house those materials.

Ukraine has a host of former scientists with nuclear expertise. As part of the Energy Department's nonproliferation efforts, Awan not only has secured nuclear sites, but also has helped those scientists find gainful employment in an effort to keep their knowledge out of the hands of terrorists.

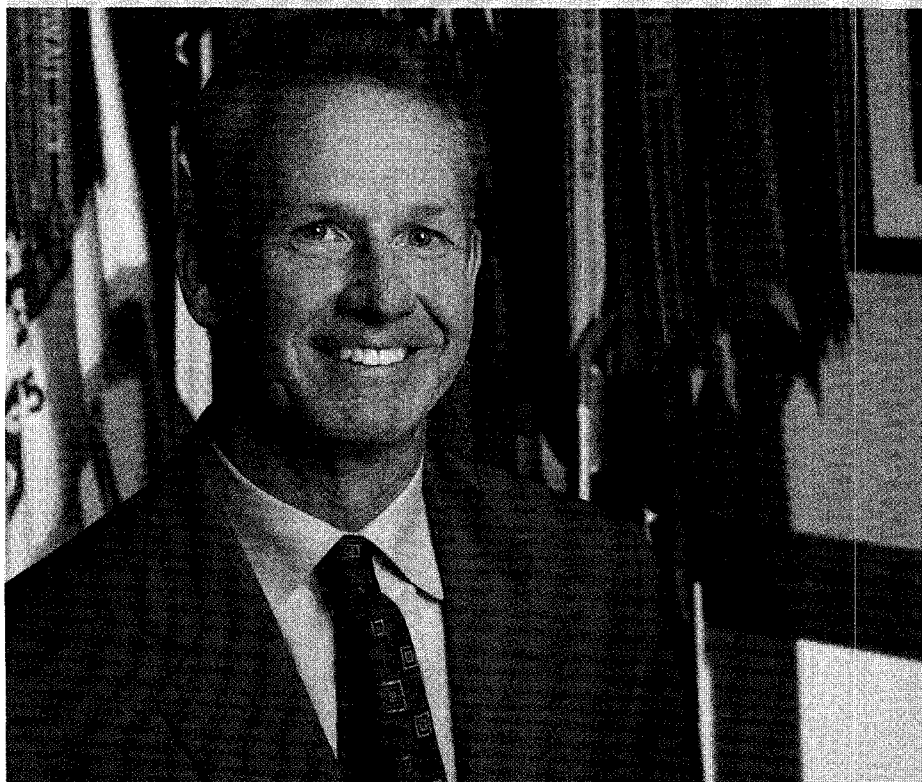
Awan, who has come a long way from a small farm without electricity to overseeing some of the largest energy-safety programs in the world, says he simply feels lucky. "This nation has given me everything I have ever wanted. I think I am indebted, but I don't think I could ever repay it."

By George Cahlink





## Environment, Science, and Technology


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### ECO-DEFENDER

**Earl Stockdale,**  
the army's  
top environmental  
lawyer, is making  
the legal case for  
cleaning up the  
Everglades

**M**aybe if Earl Stockdale had received the results of his bar exam earlier, he would have made a fortune as an attorney in private practice. Instead, the western Pennsylvania native took a job with the army while awaiting the results of the exam. Three decades later, rather than filing lawsuits, he's writing laws and brokering deals to permit the \$8 billion restoration of the Florida Everglades.

"When I got out of law school, the last thing I ever thought I would do was work for the federal government," says Stockdale, fifty-five, the army's top environmental lawyer. "But I took a job with the army because I figured it was better than getting coffee or copying papers until I received the bar exam results."

Stockdale passed the bar, but he hasn't left government work. His first job was working as legal adviser on real estate matters for the Army Corps of Engineers in central Pennsylvania in 1973, just as environmental issues were becoming a priority for the federal government. He spent the next twenty years mastering en-

vironmental law and, in 1992, was named the army's deputy general counsel for civil works and environment. In that Senior Executive Service post, he oversees the work of 500 lawyers who respond to thousands of legal opinions each year on topics ranging from cleaning up military ordnance to privatizing army family housing.

But Stockdale's most challenging project has been coming up with the legal framework for the largest environmental restoration program ever undertaken—the thirty-year remaking of South Florida's ecosystem, the Everglades. The effort is designed to turn back the clock fifty years and restore water quality to what it was before the Army Corps built 1,000 miles of canals, 720 miles of levees, and nearly 200 water structures, helping Florida become one of the fastest-growing states.

"Everyone knows about the Everglades, but people don't understand what they used to be," says Stockdale. The corps' "re-plumbing" of the Everglades decades ago spurred development, but cut its size by half and severely degraded the quality and flow of its water. Now, the corps wants to reverse some of that work to preserve the remaining 2.4 million acres of the Everglades and save its sixty-eight endangered and threatened species, while still providing enough water for commercial use.

That requires buying back land from developers, building underground wells, redirecting waterways, and constructing reservoirs. Stockdale created the legal framework for this process, known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The plan, approved by Congress in 2000, sets up cost-sharing agreements among multiple federal and state agencies and establishes a regulatory framework for the reconstruction effort.

Forging such agreements involves balancing the competing interests of developers and environmentalists, not to mention the concerns of local, state, and federal agencies and the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Defense Department general counsel William Haynes says Stockdale's "very genteel, but consistent" manner has allowed him to bridge differences between the various interested parties. "He's a good broker," Haynes says.

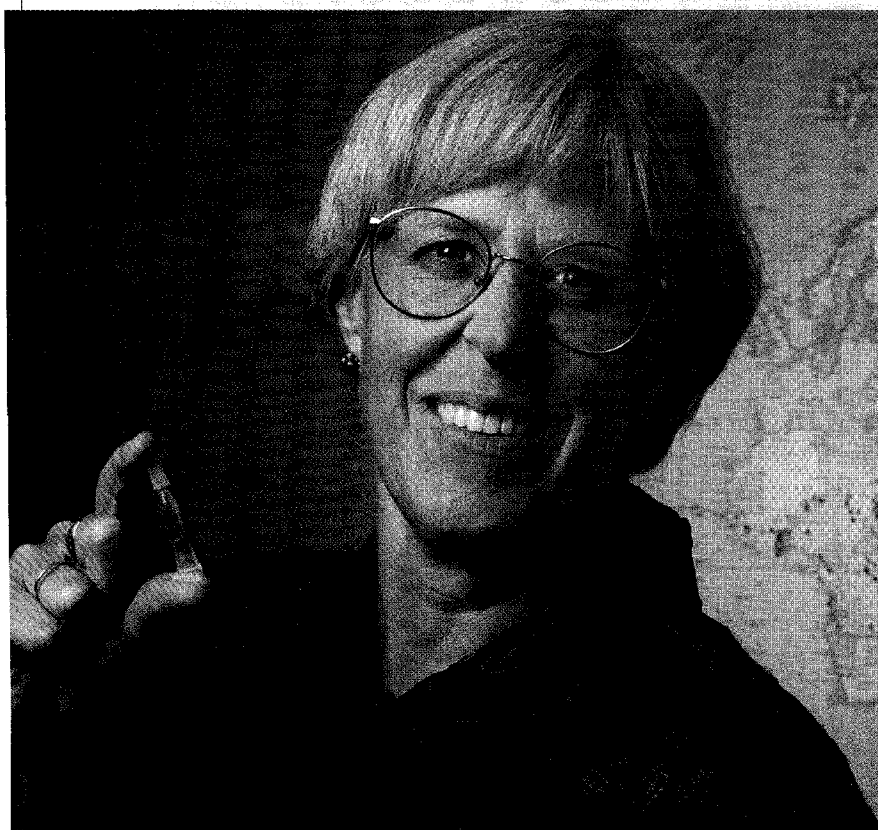
It helps to be "almost a stupidly optimistic person," Stockdale says. And he relishes having found a project worth being optimistic about. "I never want to give up on this, because this is the right thing to do," he says.

By George Cahlink





## Social Services



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# BEATING POLIO

**Denise Johnson is the tireless, reliable, uncomplaining center of an international army intent on wiping a paralyzing killer from the earth**

**D**uring the 1940s and 1950s, polio caused panic in the United States and western Europe. The virus chose the weakest victims, mostly children under three, and afflicted thousands each year. It could start with something as simple as a headache, a stiff neck, or a fever. But within a month, the virus began its terrible work, destroying the nerve cells that activate muscles, leaving them useless and the body paralyzed.

By the late 1950s, a vaccine quickly ended the polio threat in the industrialized world. But the disease lived on in poor countries. As recently as 1988, the virus still plagued 125 of them, afflicting more than 350,000 people a year. Thanks to Denise Johnson and her colleagues at the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a lot has changed since then.

In the last fifteen years, Johnson, deputy branch chief for the initiative at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, has helped lead the effort to eliminate polio from the world. Thanks to Johnson and her colleagues at the

United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, and the community service organization Rotary International, the virus now is confined to seven countries. In 2002, fewer than 2,000 cases were reported worldwide. If all goes according to plan, polio will be eliminated within the next two years. As a result, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is widely considered the gold standard of disease eradication programs.

According to her colleagues, Johnson is the glue that holds the operation together. Many days, she is at her office in Atlanta at sunrise taking calls from WHO, UNICEF, and CDC employees abroad. She makes sure these front-line workers have sufficient funds, enough polio vaccine, and good relations with the national governments with which they work.

"I think everyone, both overseas staff as well as staff in Atlanta, feels they can call on Denise any time of day or night, and have her devote 110 percent of her effort on their problem," says Virginia Swezy, an activity director for CDC's polio eradication team in Atlanta.

In the last year, Johnson, forty-seven, has traveled to India, where she stayed for a month helping the eradication team there organize and carry out a national immunization day. She also has made trips to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, and later this year she plans to visit Nigeria.

Johnson, says CDC branch chief Hamid Jafari, is the "one in the room who, despite her seniority, will always volunteer for the most difficult tasks." As Johnson herself says, "I do whatever we need."

That's been Johnson's way during a twenty-five-year career at CDC, which started for the Michigan native after college at Central Michigan University and has spanned assignments in Cincinnati; Kansas City, Missouri; Baltimore; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; New York; and, most recently, Atlanta.

During her career, Johnson has worked to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and to clean up toxic waste dumps. Before joining the polio eradication team, she oversaw a program aimed at preventing domestic and sexual violence.

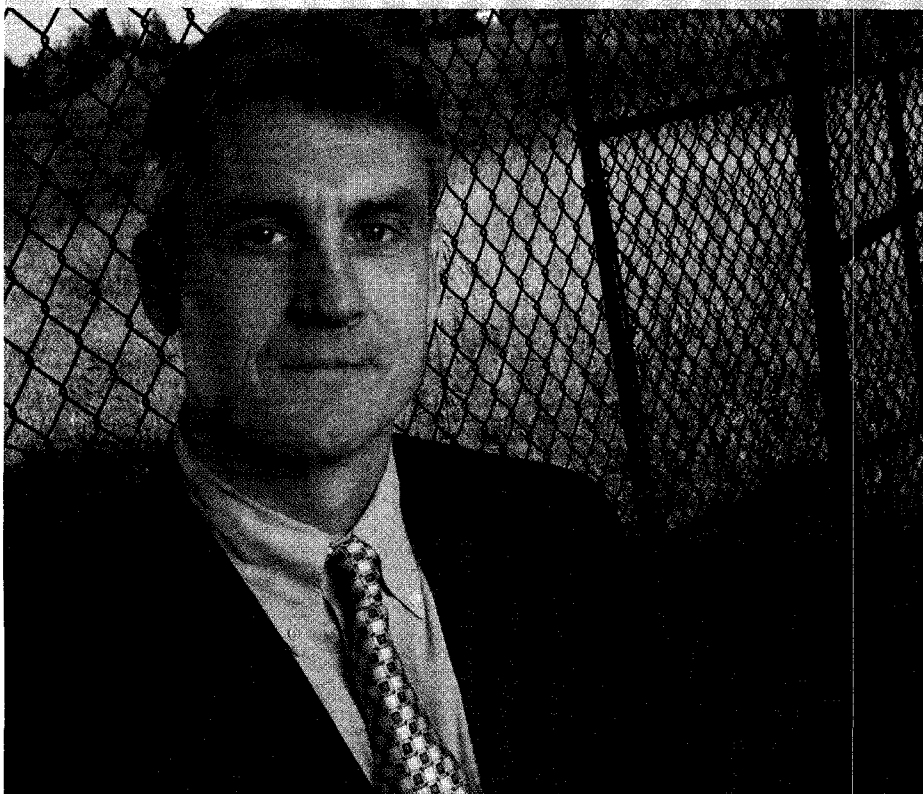
She says CDC has offered her "a great variety of important work that keeps your mind engaged. If you get tired of doing something, there is always something else that's interesting and needs to be done." But characteristically, when told about her Service to America Medal, Johnson demurred. "I'm sitting here in my air-conditioned office. In India right now, there are people on the ground tromping through villages, going house to house, looking for kids to give them the vaccine. Those are the real heroes."

By Shawn Zeller





## Justice



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# A NEW DRAGNET

**Ed Needham and his task force crossed law enforcement boundaries to bring the Lackawanna Six to justice—and raised the bar in the war on terrorism**

By Jason Peckenpaugh

**E**d Needham is no stranger to terrorism. He helped investigate the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. He tracked the terrorists who bombed Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers, a U.S. Marine Corps barracks, in 1996. And in the summer of 2002, Needham was on the streets of Buffalo, New York, his hometown, working a case that captured the attention of the intelligence agencies and President Bush.

The Lackawanna Six case, as it became known, is still making headlines. Closed just after the one-year anniversary of September 11—on September 13, 2002—the case has become a kind of Rorschach test for the government's tactics in fighting terrorism. "One by one," Bush said after the arrests, "we're hunting the killers down." But critics see the case as a sign of government's unfettered power: six U.S. citizens were put behind bars, even though investigators acknowledge the men were not planning a terrorist attack.

From any perspective, the Lackawanna Six case reveals how the war on terrorism is being fought, and, on some fronts, won. Career federal investigators—people like Ed Needham—simply do their jobs, aided by new legal tools and a top-level

commitment to share information among agencies. "People ask how you fight terrorism; well, it's doing exactly what we did," says Needham.

At the height of the investigation, Needham helped coordinate the work of fifty to sixty people from more than ten federal, state, and local agencies, all working under the banner of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force in Buffalo. The case began with just two agents: Needham and Adrienne Leary, a GS-11 FBI analyst. In June 2001, they received an anonymous tip that several young men from Lackawanna had attended an al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in spring 2001.

Some of the men learned to detonate explosives. Others sipped tea with Osama bin Laden. But the suspects wouldn't admit to even visiting Afghanistan. In interviews with Needham, the men would only say they visited Pakistan for religious training, known as Tablighi Jamaat.

A break came in May 2002, when the CIA learned that the men were recruited to Afghanistan by a "card-carrying member of al Qaeda," in the words of Peter Ahearn, the FBI's special agent in charge in Buffalo. Although the FBI will not reveal his identity, the recruiter is suspected to be Kamal Derwish, a Buffalo native who was killed in a U.S. Predator drone strike in Yemen in November 2002.

After this revelation, the task force swung into action. Needham took the lead on the criminal side of the case, while FBI agent Dave Britten managed intelligence leads. Thomas Michalski, an IRS agent, pored over tax records. Lawrence Krug and James Higgins, two Immigration and Naturalization Service agents, led round-the-clock surveillance of several suspects, including some who were never charged.

As the case unfolded, Washington took notice. Buffalo sent briefings on the case to FBI headquarters at 6:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. each day. On August 13, Needham and Britten traveled to Washington to brief FBI director Robert Mueller on the case.

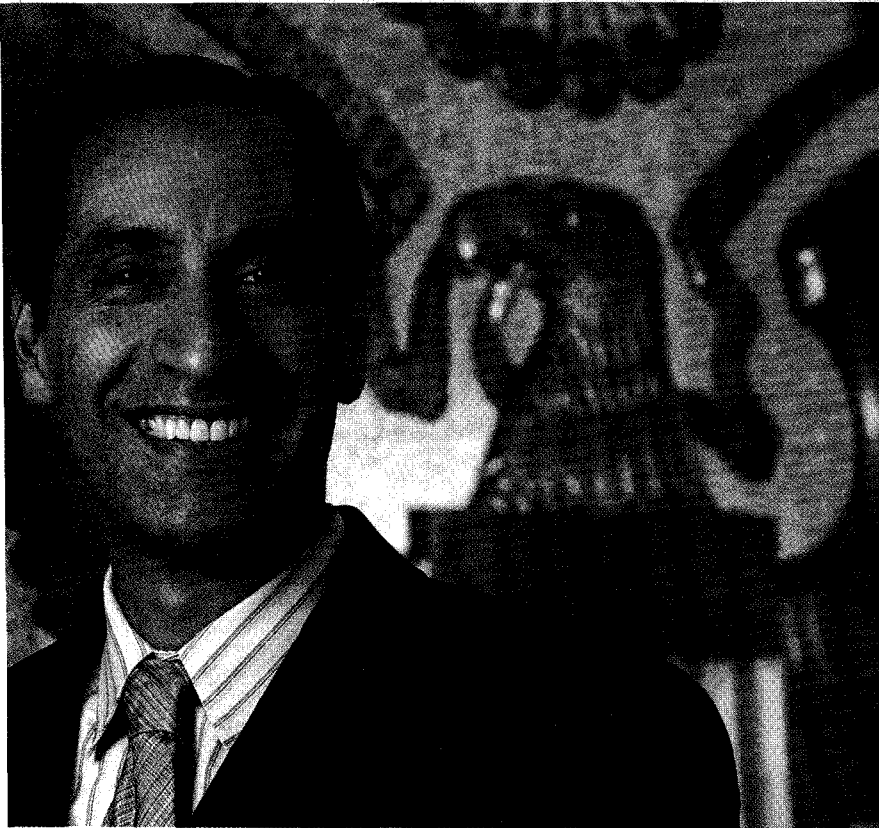
On September 11, an FBI agent in Bahrain confronted Muktar al-Bakri, one of the six men, and persuaded him to reveal their activities in Afghanistan. The arrests followed shortly. "We slept about four hours in the three days before the arrests," says Needham.

Through their diligent work, the Buffalo task force secured six convictions on charges of providing material support to terrorist groups. And they gathered intelligence that helped the CIA, says Ahearn. "I believe truly that we prevented at least one terrorist attack, because we were able to use the [Lackawanna Six] to lead us to others."





## Business and Commerce



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# WEALTH OF INFORMATION

**Nelson Hernandez**  
is on a mission  
to help low-income  
people learn  
how to manage  
their money

**R**oughly 10 percent of American households don't use banks. Instead, the people in those households rely on check-cashing stores and other short-term services, leaving them vulnerable to scams. Worse yet, they don't learn how to manage or save money.

Nelson Hernandez is out to change that—one person at a time, if necessary. “When I see those check-cashing places, I say, ‘I have to put them out [of business].’” Hernandez says with a chuckle. He’s only partly joking. This is serious business to Hernandez, who grew up in an impoverished part of Los Angeles during the 1960s. “I want people to know that there is a better way.”

That better way is Money Smart, a small yet ambitious program Hernandez runs at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The program teaches low-income adults how to use basic banking services, such as checking and savings accounts, and instructs them in financial management.

Hernandez and his team of forty FDIC staffers travel the country promoting the program and looking for partner organizations to help reach out to the poor. Starting with just one national partner—the Labor Department—in July 2001, the FDIC has since signed up 360, including twenty national organizations, four of them federal agencies.

Hernandez keeps the program focused on low-income people between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. “I want that twenty-five-year-old guy who works in the car wash,” he says. “I want that thirty-eight-year-old woman who comes in here and cleans the building at night.”

That focus has made Hernandez a powerful force in promoting Money Smart, says Doug Dylla, national coordinator of NeighborWorks, a division of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, a nonprofit organization created by Congress to support community-based economic revitalization. NeighborWorks is a Money Smart partner.

“He keeps knocking on doors. And he is continually pushing this program to the next level,” says Dylla.

When Hernandez started at the FDIC in June 2001, Money Smart was barely off the ground and the agency had no clear plan for rolling out the program. Training materials were available only in English. Hernandez immediately sought to translate the materials into Spanish. By the end of 2003, training will be available in Korean and Vietnamese, too. There are plans to put the materials on CD-ROM and eventually offer them online.

Between July 2001 and December 2002, the FDIC had sent 85,000 copies of educational materials to its partners. Those groups provide the actual classroom training. At least 100,000 people have completed the course. Of those, an estimated 13,000 have since opened bank accounts.

Hernandez says his dedication to the program “is personal because of where I grew up and my experiences.” As a young adult, he worked on community development projects in Los Angeles’s most destitute neighborhoods.

As a staffer for a local politician and at the Los Angeles office of the Housing and Urban Development Department, Hernandez has seen the difference that government can make in people’s lives.

Donna Gambrell, Hernandez’s boss at the FDIC, says his local experience is invaluable. “He has tremendous credibility because he has worked in communities,” she says. “People can tell a bureaucrat from a regular person. He can relate to people and knows how to pinpoint their needs.”

By Matthew Weinstock



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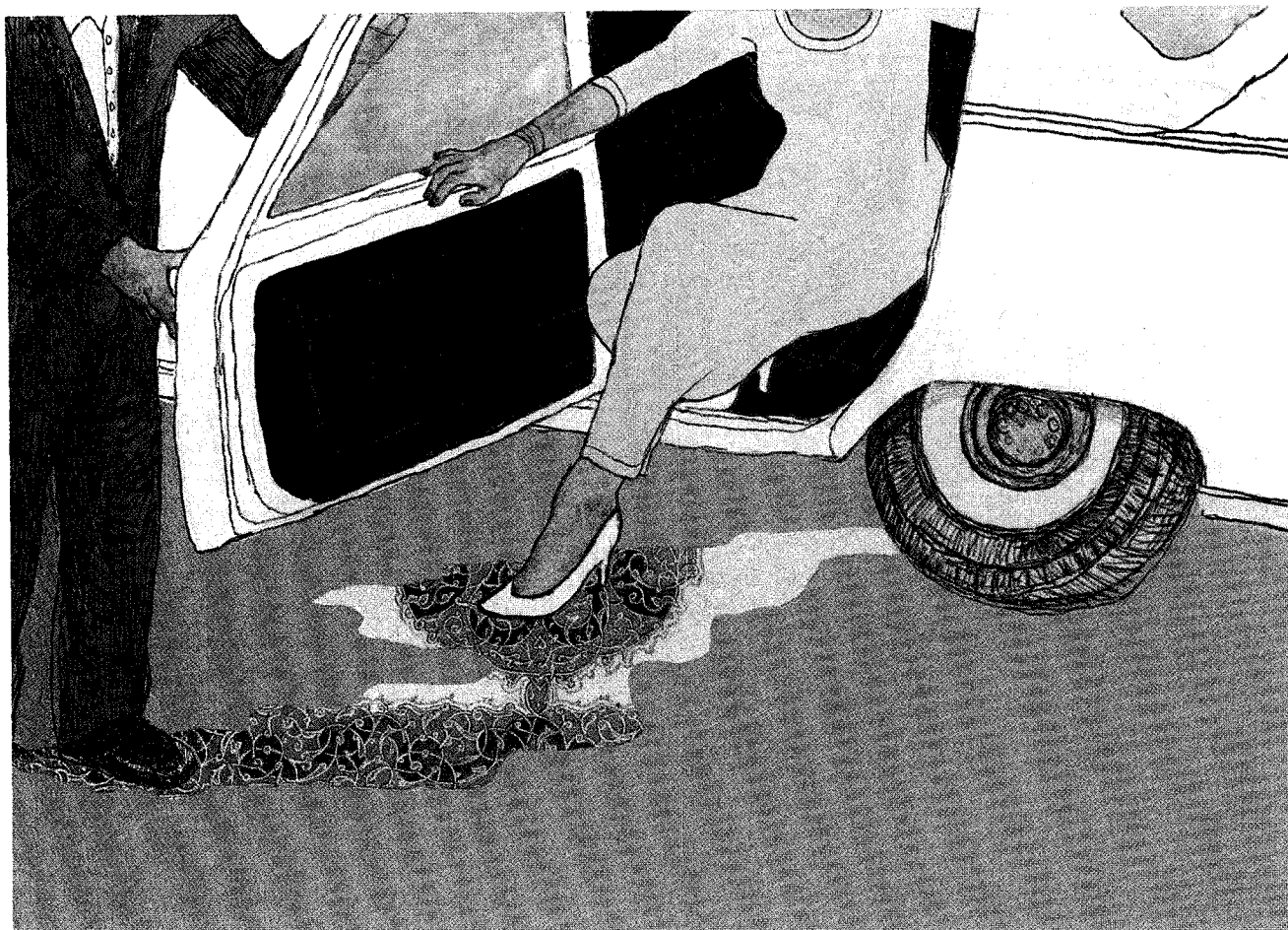
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FICTION

## THE RED CARPET

*What if, after all his talk and boasting, she disgraced him as only she could?*

BY LAVANYA SANKARAN

.....

Rangappa was content to live in a realm of different names. Officially, as per his one-page résumé, prepared for a small sum by one of the roadside typists who served the lawyers outside Bangalore's Mayo Hall, his name was T. R. Gavirangappa. Tarikere Ranganatha Gavirangappa. Anyone reading his name would instantly know that he hailed from the village of Tarikere, near the hills of Chikmagalur, and that he was the son of Ranganatha. His family called him Rangappa for short.

But at work he was known as Raju. This nominal transformation had been announced to him, quite casually, at the end of his job interview. "Your driving test was satisfactory," his prospective employer had said. "The job is yours, provided you are courteous, prompt, and

steady in your habits." And then: "Oh, and on the job you will be called Raju."

He had not really thought to protest, so everyone in the house, from the cook to his employer's three-year-old daughter, called him Raju. It took him three days to get used to it. And after a while he even began to like it. There was a film star called Raju. It was that kind of name—snappy, spry, with a certain air about it. After many months on the job he suggested to his family that perhaps they, too, should consider calling him Raju, but his father laughed at him and that was that.

He had heard about the job from his cousin, who worked as an office boy and whose boss needed a driver for his family. It would not be a company job, unfortunately—that was the best kind,

with all sorts of perks and bonuses and (best of all) membership in a union that prevented you from getting fired easily. Instead he would be hired directly by the boss's family; but they were good people, his cousin said, and would pay well. Raju (or Rangappa) heard this out with reserve; if he got the job, his cousin would be sure to earn a tip, and the promise of that was bound to make *any* boss look good.

He was to go interview immediately with the boss's wife, a Mrs. Choudhary. His heart sank at the news. His father, who had also been a driver, had once worked for a Mrs. Choudhary. He had taken the young Rangappa (or Raju) to see her, hoping to receive a gift for his son—some money, perhaps, or even a packet of biscuits. Rangappa remem-



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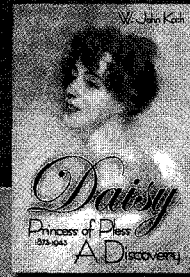
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bered standing with his father on the steps of a large house, not daring to sit, waiting for Mrs. Choudhary to emerge for her ritual round of morning shopping. He remembered a formidable woman, clad in silks and jewelry and with a round red bindi on her forehead, drawn so large that it seemed to swallow him up. His father presented him; she ignored him and told his father to hurry up with the car. Rangappa-soon-to-be-Raju had never been more scared in his life.

Now he wished he could turn his cousin down. He decided he didn't like the sound of the job (the other Mrs. Choudhary's voice resonated frighteningly through the years), and besides, he didn't really want to be beholden to his cousin, whom he suspected of harboring evil designs on his younger sister. Far better to say no: to his cousin, to this Mrs. Choudhary. Far better, indeed, to spend his time getting his younger sister married off and safe.

But he didn't have a choice. His salary had to support his parents, his sister, his wife of four years, and their little daughter. The driving job he had right now paid enough to feed any two of them, after he deducted his daily bus fare to and from work. They were all always a little hungry. This new job, this Mrs. Choudhary job, offered much more—at least, according to his cousin.

He woke up early on the morning of the interview, and rushed to fetch two buckets of water for his house from the pump down the road. He hastily washed his face and hands before joining his family for morning prayers in front of the *puja* altar, manufactured by placing colored portraits of various deities on a shelf and decorating them with flowers, turmeric and red kumkum powders, and a bit of green velvet with gold trim. The smoky fragrance of the incense sticks filtered through his senses. He and his father chanted the Sanskrit prayers for the spiritual welfare of the family and the good of the world, but his mind charted an alternate course of prayer: for this new job, and a little bit of money.

Afterward he stood in front of a mirror that hung lopsided on a cracked and peeling wall. He felt sticky and tired from

the heat of the night, but a water shortage in the district prevented him from having a bath. Two buckets of water would have to last his family for that entire day. He took a little coconut oil from his wife's bottle and rubbed it into his hair before combing it neatly through.

"You should take a bath," his father said, from the stoop in front of the house. He had sat there every morning, sipping his morning tumbler of coffee, since an injured back had forced his retirement. "And, very important, you need a new, clean shirt. Otherwise they won't hire you. You should look smart. I know these things. Daughter, give your husband a new shirt."

Rangappa's wife looked timidly at Rangappa. He had no new shirt, hadn't had one for a while. "There is no new shirt, Appa," Rangappa told his father. "Never mind. I'll go as I am."

"Well, don't blame me if you don't get the job. I know about these things. If you come back empty-handed, don't blame me."

The Choudhary house stood in a large garden, two stories high and gleaming whitely at the end of a cement driveway edged with rosebushes whose blossoms would never be plucked for the altar but would remain in the garden to wither and die at their master's pleasure. Rangappa's first glimpse of the house didn't reduce the tension in his back. He knew that the obvious wealth of his prospective employers didn't automatically translate into good working conditions. Some of these memsahibs could fight over the last rupee with all the possessive fierceness of those old crones who sold vegetables in the early-morning market.

The guard at the gate escorted him to the front door, surrendering him to the maid who answered. She asked him to leave his shoes at the door and step into the foyer. "Wait here. I'll tell her you've come."

Rangappa studied the maid carefully. She looked well fed. She wore a sari that he would have loved to buy for his wife. She didn't seem cowed or rude. These were good signs.

"Who is it?" A woman's lazy voice came from the landing of the curving



staircase in the corner, and Rangappa looked up. He felt himself seized by shock. He stared at the apparition for a quick instant, and immediately looked down at the floor in embarrassment. The voice said, "Someone for the driver job? Oh, good. Ask him to wait, I'll be right down."

Rangappa's thoughts paralyzed him in disbelief. He couldn't reconcile the bizarre figure he had seen with the haughty memsahib of his imaginings. That slip of a girl, surely no older than his teenage sister, was practically *naked*: wearing nothing more than a man's banian vest and pair of loose shorts that, together, exposed most of her legs, all of her arms, and a good bit of her chest. The maid didn't seem to be bothered by this, and Rangappa immediately worried, What manner of house was this? He was a decent, respectable man.

The marble floor beneath his feet ran in every direction, giving way here and there to carpets that glowed with the jewel-bright colors of a silken wedding sari. Rangappa's glance traced the dull gleam of the heavy bronze sculptures. Along with the sofas and the paintings and the dark wooden cabinets, rich with objects that glistened and shone, they reminded him of a movie set. But instead of stepping away at the end of a day's shooting, these people lived on in their movie-star lives.

Except, from what he had seen, this set seemed to lack a proper heroine.

The next time Mrs. Choudhary appeared, she had aged about a decade and a half. Gone was that young sprightliness, vanished behind a thick robe, belted at her waist, that stretched from shoulders to ankles. She seated herself on a sofa and asked the maid to bring her some coffee. Her voice was soft and polite, but Raju had seen memsahibs with soft and polite voices turn into screaming banshees when faced with a minor transgression. He stood alert. She sipped her coffee and studied his résumé, which he'd presented to her in a tattered envelope: a single sheet of paper, folded and refolded, marked with brown creases, smudged with fingerprints, and with the word "BIO-DATA" typed at the top of the page in large capital letters.

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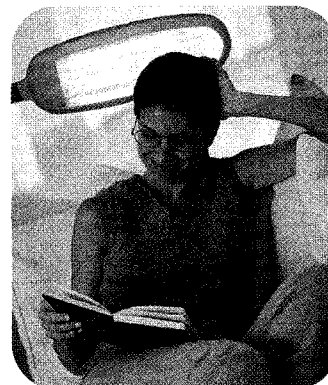
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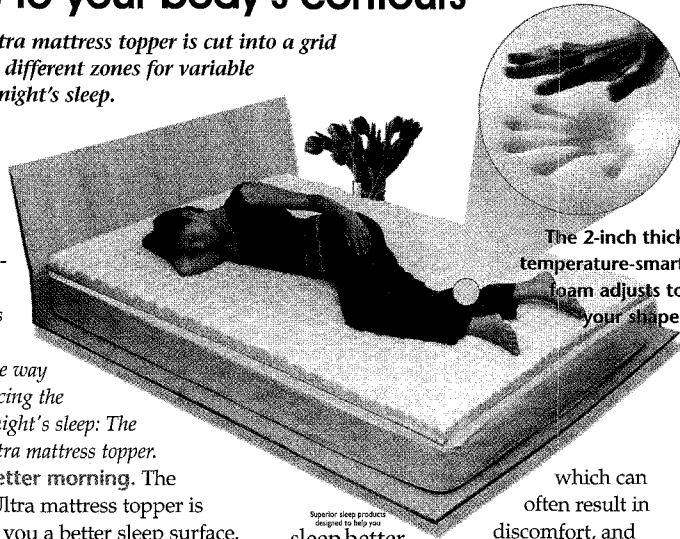
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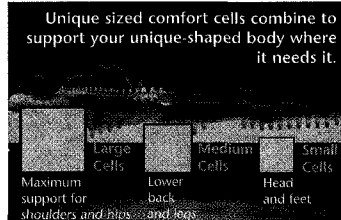
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When describing it all later to his father, he portrayed himself as having had a savoir faire he'd never really felt during the interview, and failed to mention how his hands had left the steering wheel of the car sticky with perspiration during the driving test. He did talk about how she'd made him drive right into the worst traffic the city had to offer, and had praised the way he'd handled it. He talked of her commandments, completely contrary to the conventional wisdom on the crazy, unruly city roads: when driving for her, he was to drive slowly and, oddly, to follow the rules, follow the rules, follow the rules.

Back at her house after the driving test, she resumed her seat on the sofa, her face set in stern lines behind her glasses. His relief at her praise instantly abated. Now began the inevitable battle over his qualifications and his salary, between his need and her whimsy. And by the looks of her now, she would not be a pushover.

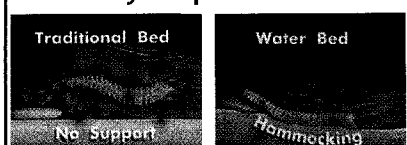
"Your driving test was satisfactory," she said. "The job is yours, provided you are courteous, prompt, and steady in your habits."

He waited. He hadn't mentioned his expectations, wanting to hear what she would offer first. Then, if it was too low, perhaps no more than what he was currently earning, he would try bargaining, begging, pleading. He would tell her of his family's poverty and the many mouths that needed to be fed. Not that such a strategy would work, necessarily; mem-sahibs always treated such stories as just that—stories, tales that their domestic staff conjured up out of the air for a momentary amusement. He waited.

She nodded briskly and offered a salary that was two and a half times what he was making. In his elation he forgot all about the first rule in a wage negotiation: keep an impassive face and hold out for more. He grinned happily and barely heard what she said next: "Oh, and on the job you will be called Raju."

At home, later, he handed around celebratory sweetmeats and recounted to his family how he had then been told to go around to the kitchen and how the cook, Rosa, an immense woman (obviously a devoted servant of

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her own art), had introduced him to the other servants in the house: Shanti, the baby's ayah, who had opened the door to him that morning; Asha, the top-work maid, who cleaned the whole house; and Subbu, the silent little gardening boy. How she had given him hot, sweet tea and a freshly made rava dosa, the semolina batter mixed with onions and green chilies and fried thin and crisp and delicious. And how she had told him that as long as he worked there, all his meals would be catered from that large kitchen, as per the memsahib's orders. Breakfast when he arrived, lunch at one, tea or coffee on demand.

Rangappa-now-Raju did some boasting that day. He never did share that extraordinary first moment, though, when his employer had cavorted into his presence in the most indecent of clothes, like one of those scandalous females on the foreign TV channels. He never mentioned that. And a full week passed before he told his family of the change in his professional name.

And so he settled down to working for Mrs. Choudhary. Of course he didn't call her that. When he first started work, he referred to her as "Amma," but he soon found that even that wasn't quite suitable. The other servants in the house called her Madam, pronounced not as the word's English originators had imagined but, rather, "May-dum." As in "May-dum *kareethidhare*"—Madam wants you. "May-dum *oota maduthidhare*"—Madam is eating her lunch.

His routine remained unchanged through the first year. He would arrive by eight, catching two buses to do so, and straightaway wash and polish both the cars, hoping to finish in time to grab a quick cup of coffee before driving May-dum's little daughter and her ayah to school. He always finished cleaning the big black car first. It was one of the latest models, and May-dum's husband, referred to as "Saibru," or "Master," by the servants, drove it himself, jealously refusing to let anyone else touch the wheel. Raju always had it clean and ready when Saibru hurriedly exited the house at eight-thirty. Raju would salute him and receive a nod for his pains; the two men hadn't exchanged more than a dozen words.

Then he'd clean her car, which was just as smart. Even smarter, Raju thought, loving its gleaming whiteness and fancy interior. He was aware that she didn't share his opinion. The car had arrived from the showroom about six months after he'd joined. He had inspected it with extreme pride and possessiveness. This was *his* car, really—the one that he would drive, the one that he'd be seen driving. It was a prestigious make. He peeped inside at the opulent furnishings: the velvet seats, the gleaming red carpet. His fingers itched to take the wheel. She's going to love this, he thought.

She didn't. She came out to inspect it with a girlfriend, and her first comment was "Oh, God, not white!"

Raju threw the door open for her inspection, and immediately she groaned. "Will you look at this? Velvet seats! Oh, God, and that red carpet! Could anything be in worse taste?"

The friend considered the matter and said, "Well, at least the windows aren't tinted black."

"That's true," May-dum had said, laughing. "Then it would definitely look like a greasy politician's car!"

"Oh, it still does," the friend said.

Whatever their opinion, Raju was proud of the car. He just wished his family could see him driving it.

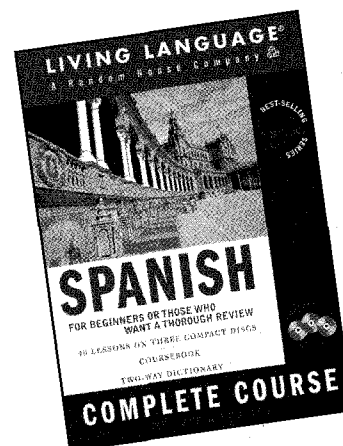
Some time passed before he began to realize that this job consisted of more than just driving a car. His father, in this instance, had been right after all.

"You must act smart," the old man had said. "You don't know how to act smart. You are going to lose this good job because you must act smart and not like a coolie. When that happens, don't blame me."

At first he had ignored this talk, especially when his father carried on about how to open the car door ("Open the door, hold it open while she gets in or out, and then close it firmly but not loudly"), demonstrating on an imaginary door handle and clutching his aching back all the while. Previously Raju had worked as a transport driver for small manufacturing companies that used minivans to transport goods and people. Cost and speed were of the essence there; the niceties didn't really matter.

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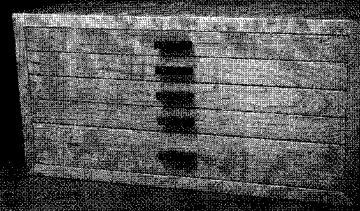
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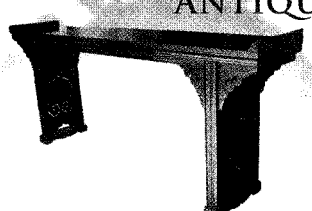


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But now he was in a different sphere. He started to pay attention to how other drivers did things, at the big hotels or at the Club, where May-dum liked to spend time with her friends. It was true. The smartest drivers acted so. One evening Raju really listened to his father, so surprising the old man that he enthusiastically lengthened his lecture by a half hour, and got up to demonstrate so often that his back suffered for it the whole night long.

The next morning Raju was ready. As soon as May-dum appeared, he leaped to open the door, standing (smartly, he hoped) at attention. She paused, surprise and amusement warring on her face, and then she smiled. "Thank you," she said, and slid into the car. The warmth of that smile stayed with him that entire day.

From his father he learned to greet her cheerily the first thing every morning. He bought a can of air freshener with his own money, and, as he'd seen another driver at the Club do, he would spray the car's interior before driving from the car park to the main clubhouse to pick her up. He learned to anticipate her movements, running to carry her bags as soon as she emerged from a shop, staying alert for the sudden sound of her voice. He watched to see which side of the car she approached, so that he could have the door open and ready for her. After a while he learned to tell, just by looking at her clothes, whether she wanted to visit the gym, go shopping, or meet with her friends. Sometimes he could even guess correctly what music she would play on the car stereo.

And in return, she never raised her voice at him. No screaming at him when the car got stuck in traffic. No shouting that he was a fool, and the son of fools. No muttering that he should be fired, the idiot, the rascal, just let him try and get another job as good as this.

That was the nicest thing about her; nicer, in a way, than even the wages, or the good meals, or her carelessly handed-over parcels of food and old but still excellent clothing, which made her especially interesting to his family. She never raised her voice. She was always polite. Raju's father would shake his head slowly when he heard that. "That's

rare," he would say. "Very rare. Son, don't be stupid and lose this job and allow your family to starve. Take my advice. You won't get such a place again easily."

She didn't shout even when things went wrong, such as when he dented the side of the new car by backing into a truck that wasn't supposed to be there. That was a moment when, he felt, she was fully entitled to lose her temper and lecture him angrily. Instead she just went over the incident with him in detail, accepted his fervent apologies, and asked him to ensure that it never happened again.

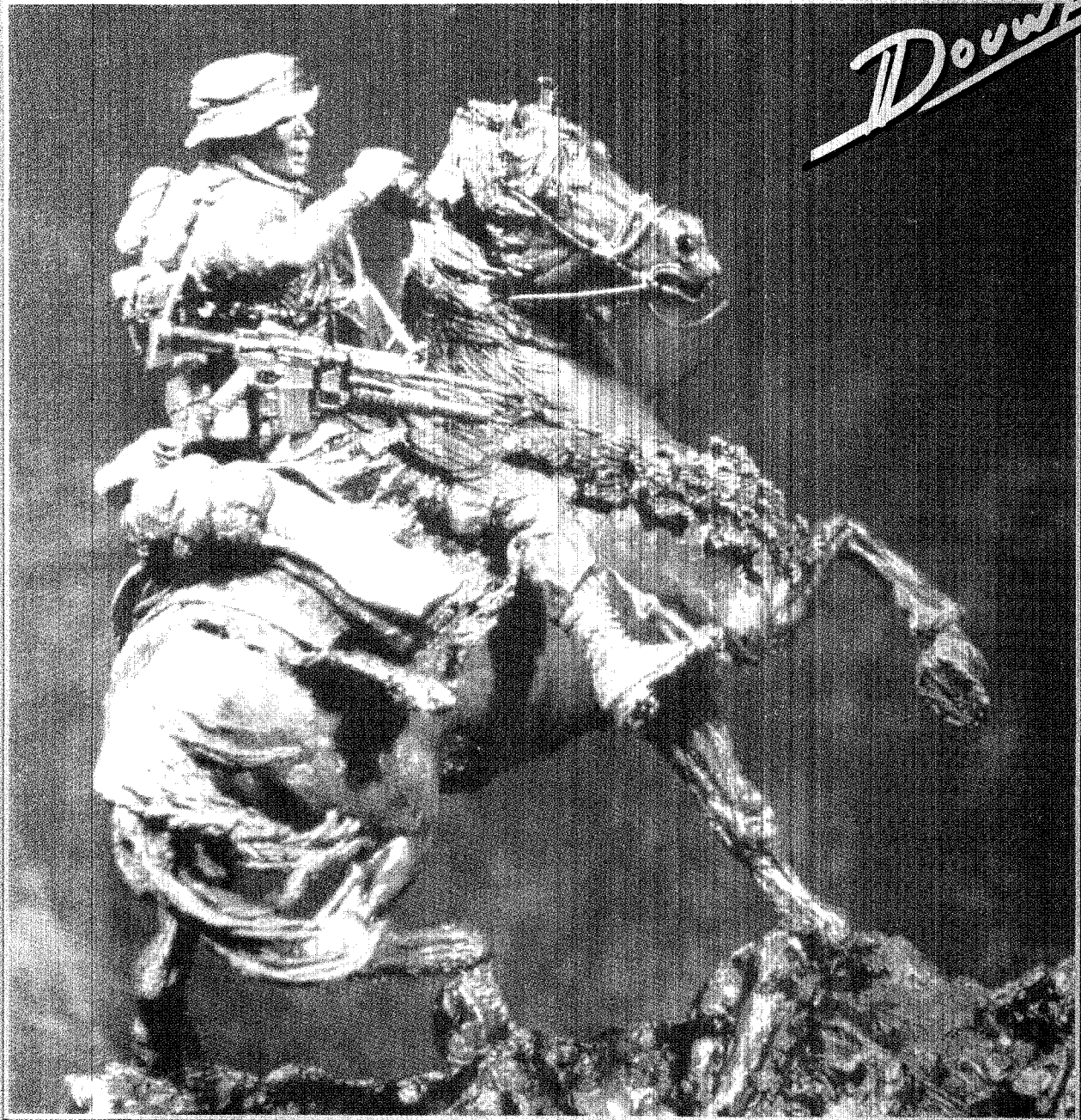
The other servants in the house seemed to be aware of their good luck as well. It was both a fashion and a reflection of harsh reality for domestic workers to complain to one another about their working conditions: the rotten food, the meager salaries, the unsympathetic memsahibs. At times their grumbling seemed almost a competition to see who had it worst. The staff here never did that. Certainly, when eating together and gossiping, they traded hard-luck stories. That was only to be expected, for who didn't have sorrow in their lives? But then they would also tell him, "You know, if you have any problems, you should talk to May-dum about it. She'll help."

But in those early days he couldn't see himself taking the liberty. Besides, just the previous day, for the first time in years, he had bought a chicken on the way home from work, and the rare sweetness of the meat still flowed in his veins, mellowing his view of the world.

After a while he gave up trying to resolve the inherent contradiction in May-dum: that someone who made such an ideal employer—who, indeed, redefined his very notion of memsahibs—could also, simultaneously, present what he could characterize as nothing other than a Lax Moral Outlook. The problem wasn't just her style of dressing—scanty outfits that revealed her arms, her midriff, her legs, in fashions most suitable for a prostitute or a film star or a foreigner. It was also her style of speaking with her friends: curses, jokes, comments and conversation of a frankness that, on the whole, made



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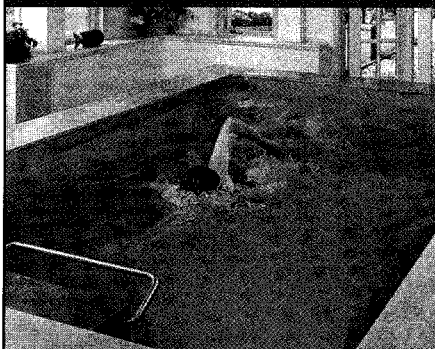
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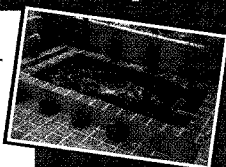


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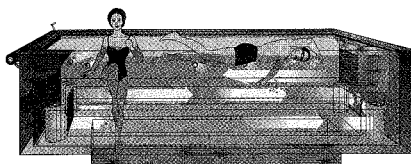
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him grateful he could barely follow the English in which they spoke.

And then, she smoked. When Raju's younger brother had started smoking, their father had thrashed the living day-lights out of him as soon as he found out about it. His brother still smoked, but was always careful to do it discreetly and never in front of the family elders. Not so his May-dum. She lit up casually, elaborately, luxuriously, all over the place, leaving a trail of noxious fumes behind her.

He was still very new when, one day, he'd driven her and one of her girlfriends out to lunch. She'd introduced him laughingly as her new driver, and he had smiled politely and touched his forehead at the friend. When they were both inside the car, he heard the friend comment, "Wasn't your last driver also called Raju?"

"Actually, his name was Murugesh."

"Hm. I could swear ..." The other woman looked confused.

Raju knew all about this Murugesh-also-called-Raju: a competent driver, he'd been fired for drinking on the job. At first this knowledge had pleased Raju, as evidence of his employer's probity. But that was, of course, before he'd gotten to know May-dum better. Driving while drunk was what she had objected to. It was not the drink itself, as he'd rapidly learned firsthand.

Sometimes, on a Friday or a Saturday, she would ask him to stay late, past his six o'clock end of duty. She would pay him extra for his overtime, and give him dinner, so it wasn't really a problem. His family liked the extra money.

The first time, she'd gone out to a formal dinner, dressed in a sari and looking lovely. The next time had been different. First of all, she was dressed in a skirt so short that it couldn't have been longer than the span of his hand. Then, she had asked him to drive her to a pub. He knew all about such places: they were nothing more than elaborate versions of the drinking halls that dotted his own neighborhood, where men he'd known as boys had become dissolute and useless and a burden to their wives and families.

He had waited outside the pub for May-dum for four hours, watching the stream of fashionable, alien traffic enter

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a door from which music, light, and the thin smell of alcohol emerged, until midnight had come and gone. Then he finally saw her again, clinging to the arm of another woman and laughing. "Here's Raju! He'll drop us home."

He had opened the door and stood there woodenly while the two women fumbled and crawled their way into the back seat. The enclosed car was filled with the fumes of their breath. They both smelled of smoke and dissipation. They had laughed and giggled, out of control, all the way to their respective homes.

He knew that this behavior was unacceptable. Immoral. Should be stopped. He also knew that he shouldn't, by any calculation, like and respect May-dum so much. But there didn't seem to be anything he could do about that either.

This wasn't something he could discuss with any of his co-workers; the maids in the house seemed to have developed a strange blindness where May-dum was concerned, excusing behavior in her that they would have condemned in anyone else. And he could never bring himself to mention this aspect of her at home.

Really, the only person who seemed to criticize May-dum was her mother-in-law—and that was another situation that bothered Raju a lot. A few months after he'd joined, Shanti came out one morning to ask him to have the car by the front door in ten minutes. "She's going to visit her mother-in-law," she said. "The old lady is just back from a visit to her other son's house, in America." Her mother-in-law? Raju inquired in some surprise. Lives in the same city? Why do they not then live in the same house? This was unheard of.

May-dum's face, when she emerged, was preoccupied. He studied it in the rearview mirror while he drove, as she stared out the window at the passing traffic, looking wistfully at cars moving in the opposite direction. They arrived very quickly at another large house.

"Keep the car running and be ready to leave," she told Raju before entering the house. He thought it through and decided that she must have been joking—there had been an odd note in her voice. He decided to wait where he was; if she was in a hurry, he could start

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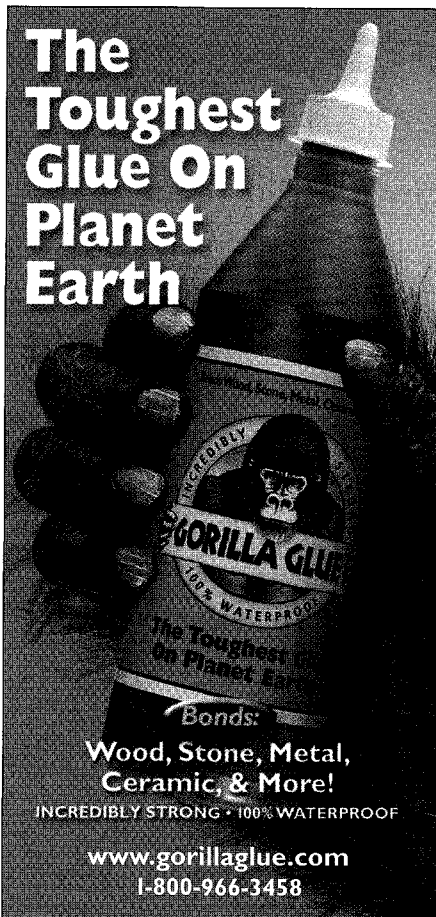
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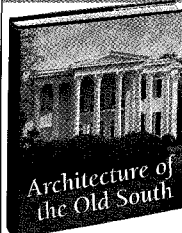
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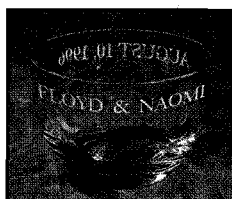
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the car quickly. He was glad about his decision, because she finally reappeared a whole hour later.

With her, standing on the steps, was a diminutive woman whose voice carried all the way over to him. Was that her mother-in-law? Raju mechanically drove the car up to the steps of the house, opened the door for May-dum, and took a set of bags from her and placed them inside the car before turning to study her companion. He got a shock. The little lady standing next to her was the same Mrs. Choudhary who had terrorized him all those years ago. She still dressed in silk and large bindis, her voice still had that harsh edge that had repulsed him, but sometime in the past fifteen years she had shrunk in size. Now, when had that happened?

As before, she ignored him. She was saying to May-dum, "... so wear the clothes I have bought for you. They will suit you more than that rubbish that you always wear. More proper. More suitable. And the frock for Baby is also very pretty, na? Much better than those shorts you put her in, poor thing. I always feel so bad when I look at her, dressed like that."

May-dum's smile didn't waver, at least not until the car was on its way. Raju glanced in the rearview mirror and saw her eyes filling with uncontrollable tears. And though Mother-in-law Choudhary's words expressed his sentiments exactly, at that moment all he wanted to say was "Please don't be upset by that woman—she's awful, I know, but she shrinks with time."

When they got home, she handed the bags to him. "Here are some clothes," she said. "Perhaps your wife will like them. And take the dresses for your daughter."

He peeked inside the bag before protesting. He could see expensive saris in bright colors, a frilly child's frock in pink. They were lovely, but already he knew that May-dum wouldn't think so. "But, May-dum, they are brand-new."

She smiled kindly at him. "Well, that's good, isn't it?"

Gradually, over the course of the first year, he stopped worrying about her inappropriate deportment and just accepted it as one of life's irregularities,

like those politicians who seemed to have earned all the graces of God in spite of corrupt, wicked living.

Didn't think about it, that is, until today.

Today he was once again concerned about her behavior—feverishly, anxiously concerned. What would she wear? Something decent, or not? He had a sudden mental image of her appearing in scanty shorts, a cigarette in one hand and a bottle of whiskey in the other, and his heart almost failed. What if she did dress like that? Then, he immediately resolved, he would just have to pretend that he couldn't find the right directions; he had lost his way, lost his mind, something like that.

He could never take her to meet his family if she was dressed like that.

This momentous visit was the product of a conversation he'd had with her about a month earlier. It had come about casually enough. May-dum had been busy at her desk all morning, and then had handed him a set of bills, the check payments neatly attached, along with instructions on where each was to be paid. The last item was her daughter's annual school fees, a large but apparently appropriate amount for three hours of supervised singing and paint splattering every weekday.

"And what about your daughter, Raju?" she asked casually at the end, raising her spectacles with one hand and rubbing her eyes with the other. "Are you sending her to school somewhere?"

Raju nodded dumbly. Of all the passions of his soul, one reigned supreme. He worshipped his little daughter. She had just turned three, but when she was born, he could already envisage the successes of her life as he held her tiny body in his hands. She would be educated. She would be healthy and well nourished. She would be proud. Well dressed. Beautiful. She would work in an office, in a job that would one day earn her a car of her own. She would be a may-dum in her own right.

His mother had wanted to call the baby Akkamma, after her own mother, but Raju had said no. He'd already decided to call her Hema Malini, after the film actress, his first sight of whom (as a young boy) he'd never forgotten: she



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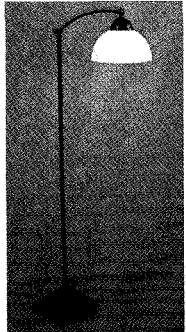
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was the most beautiful woman in the universe, a dream girl with liquid eyes and glowing skin and hair that tumbled down her back. His father had told him that the baby's name didn't matter. He commiserated: "Your firstborn is a girl. That's a shame. My firstborn was a boy. A man should have three sons and a daughter, just like I did. That is glory. But don't worry. Next time you will have a boy. You are my son, after all."

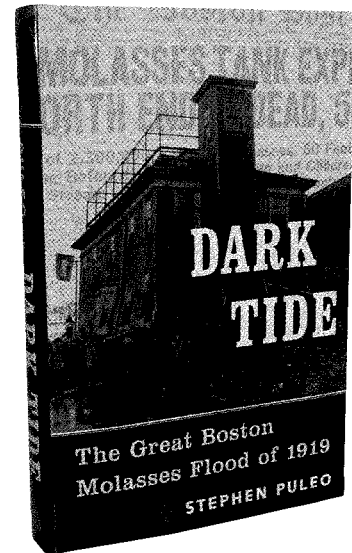
Raju wasn't worried. He had thought the whole thing through quite a while back and, independent of his father, had made a few decisions. That night, after dinner, while lying next to his wife and listening to the heavy breathing of his parents sleeping in another corner of the same room, he told her his ideas: not having a son didn't matter; they would bring up their daughter to be strong and self-reliant. In fact, with the cost of living so high, perhaps they shouldn't try for another child, boy or girl, no matter what his father said. Better to have one child and look after her well than to have more and leave them half starved. If money improved, then later, perhaps, they could reconsider. In the meantime, they had been visited by a little goddess and they should be grateful. His wife was herself one of nine children, born into a family where daughters were considered the usual burden. If she was uncomfortable with Raju's odd ideas, she didn't comment.

After Raju got his job with May-dum, he was doubly convinced of the truth of his belief. Little Hema, with her tears and laughter and mischief, was none other than a manifestation of the goddess Lakshmi herself, giver of wealth and prosperity.

"Where is she studying? She's three years old, isn't she?"

He nodded again, and mentioned the name of the little one-room school that his daughter attended. He expected May-dum to nod and send him on his way, but she didn't. Instead she asked him a great many questions about his life, and especially about his daughter.

Before he knew it, he was telling her everything: all his hopes, his dreams, his fondest wishes for his beloved Hema,



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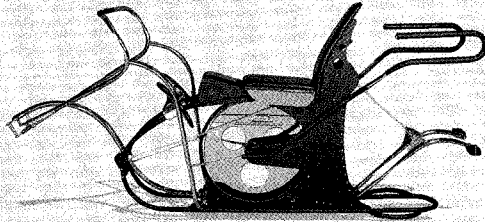


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and the despair that had dogged his footsteps these past few months. For how was he to continue to educate her with so many mouths to feed? His higher salary seemed to be eaten up just as quickly as his old one, in medical bills and food and, most recently, the need to collect an amount large enough to marry off his younger sister. How could he possibly take care of Hema in the manner of his dreams?

Later, he'd emerged from May-dum's study in a curious mixture of horror and delirium. Horrified that he had divulged everything so freely, he who always kept his own counsel. Delirious because May-dum had said that she would take care of little Hema's education herself. He was not to worry.

Furthermore, she said, she would like to see where the little girl studied, and could he please arrange a visit?

Once his excitement settled down, he and his family had needed a full month to organize things. His father assumed generalship of the affair, and Raju let him. He himself was at work the whole day, and this was not a matter he could leave to his wife; she lacked the experience. She was not a man of the world.

Raju and his father would stay up late every evening, immersed in progress reviews: What should they do to the house? Could they afford to repaint it? Didn't So-and-so's brother-in-law work in a paint shop? Perhaps he could get some cheap color for them at a discount. And what would they offer her to eat? Would she consent to eat anything at all? Would she show them that respect? And how should they all dress? As if for a wedding? Or more casually? "Respectably," said Raju, to whom that word evoked the best images. "Respectably."

And so they had planned and arranged and organized. Raju spoke to his daughter's schoolteacher, who was awed and delighted at the prospect of a visit to her little school from such an important patron.

The day before the visit he reviewed everything. And now, as he stood outside his employer's house, cleaning her car as never before, he acknowledged that the only unforeseeable, unplannable catch in



the whole event was May-dum herself.

His family probably envisioned her as a standard memsahib, traditionally and expensively dressed, preaching morality and good family values. And—uniquely—acting on them too. What if, after all his talk and boasting, she disgraced him as only she could—carelessly, in the things that were to her utterly trivial, matters of dress and feminine deportment? He would still be loyal to her, but his pride, his prestige in his family and neighborhood, would be lost forever.

The car was cleaned and polished and ready. Instead of following his usual practice of going around to the kitchen for a cup of coffee, he stood waiting expectantly, staring at the door. Yesterday she had said that she would be ready to leave around ten o'clock. He still had almost forty-five minutes to go, but he didn't feel like wandering away, as if that might cause her to change her mind, or tempt her to sneak away from the house on foot or on her daughter's small bicycle.

At ten minutes past ten his heart sank. He scolded himself for getting his hopes up, for expecting this visit to actually occur. He hadn't yet seen May-dum, but he'd seen enough to know that she wouldn't be going anywhere that morning. Just five minutes earlier the gates had opened to allow a car through. It was May-dum's mother-in-law, come to pay a surprise visit. This could last anywhere from five minutes to a full day, depending on her mood and her daughter-in-law's quiescence.

Exactly one hour later the elder Mrs. Choudhary vanished in a blaze of satisfaction down the drive. Raju began to feel nervous all over again. Would May-dum decide to leave now, or would she decide it was too late, and that they would have to postpone the whole thing till the next day? Would he be able to? His family had used precious water to scrub themselves clean that morning, and they were all instructed to be on their best behavior. His wife had prepared a sweet and a savory with ghee, the clarified butter that he had bought specially for the occasion. The food wouldn't last long in the hot weather. He didn't know if he could marshal all

these resources for two days running.

Shanti, the ayah, appeared. "May-dum wants you to bring the car to the porch," she said routinely. His heart skipped. He watched her return to the house, and was almost tempted to call her back. He hadn't yet confided in any of his colleagues about May-dum's proposed visit to his house. The very idea of it would be as startling to them as it had been to him. Would they approve, or would they be envious? They were all good people, but Raju didn't want even a hint of a jealous, evil eye cast upon this visit. Let it happen, he told himself. Then he would tell everybody.

He drove the car around to the porch, watching the door and wondering once again how she would be dressed. The door opened. He heard her voice call out to the cook to bring her a glass of cold water. Two minutes later she emerged. Raju almost laughed in delight and relief. She was wearing a lovely *salwar kameez*, the full-sleeved tunic flowing elegantly down to her calves, her ankles modestly covered by the loose pants below, the crisp, transparent, shawl-like *dupatta* draped and pleated over one shoulder. She looked like a movie star. Better than that, even, she looked every inch the memsahib.

She paused near the top of the steps and smiled in his direction. "Ready to go, Raju?"

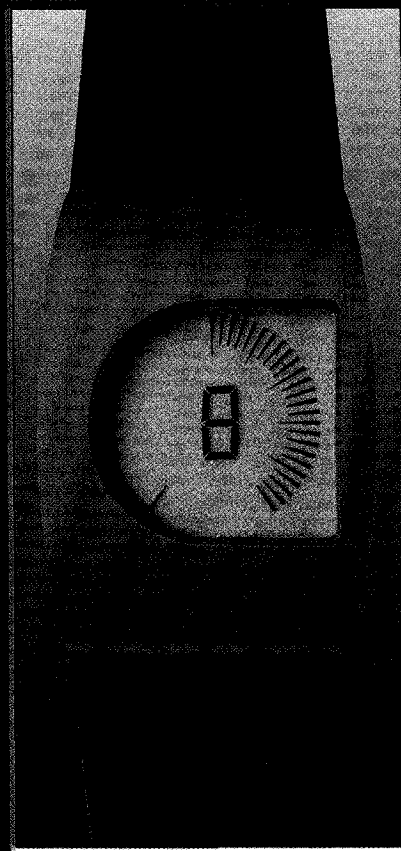
Raju spent an hour and a half on two buses to get to and from work every day. The gleaming, air-conditioned car made the trip in thirty minutes. The route took them away from the posh residential areas of the city, into and past industrial areas, and into regions that weren't really scaled for human habitation but had nevertheless been colonized by the hordes of workers who fed the appetites of a hungry city. As they neared his neighborhood, Raju kept glancing nervously into the rearview mirror. She was gazing intently out the window. What was she thinking? As he'd done for a month now, he tried to see his surroundings through her eyes.

"How much farther to the school, Raju?"

"Hardly five minutes, May-dum."

She started asking him questions

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about the neighborhood, and as he had once before, Raju found himself talking freely to her. Housing ranged from tenements to small single-room dwellings. These buildings had few power connections, even fewer legal ones. The water supply was haphazard. The buses, thankfully, ran fairly close to the area—he could catch one into the city just a half kilometer from his house.

He turned off the main road and immediately encountered a problem—one that he hadn't foreseen. The asphalt changed to muddy pathways ravaged by the rains. The people who lived here usually either walked or traveled on two-wheelers that could slither and slide and navigate their way through these roads that were never intended for heavy four-wheel traffic. Raju inched the car along, feeling it slip down muddy slopes and miniature sand crevasses, hearing the wheels catch and spin in the mud. He had a horrible vision of getting his employer and her car stuck here, and forcing her to walk in the hot, muddy road. He shifted into the lowest gear and concentrated on getting the car down the side of a hill. At the bottom lay the school, a little further on his home.

They were two hours later than planned. Raju parked the car and escorted May-dum to the door, where the schoolteacher immediately appeared, ready and waiting for them. Raju noticed that the one-room school was a little tidier than usual. The chairs were in a straight line. The twelve little children who studied with his daughter were mostly dressed in worn, ill-fitting clothes that were yet cleaner than their stained faces and dusty hair; a few were in newly acquired blue-and-white uniforms. A new map was on the wall. A chair had been placed next to the teacher's, so that May-dum would have somewhere to sit. He glanced briefly at his daughter. She was staring open-mouthed at May-dum, as were all the children. He was pleased to see that his daughter was the best-dressed child in the class, but that was natural. For months now she'd worn nothing but May-dum's daughter's castoffs: best-quality outfits, thick sweaters, sturdy shoes—clothes that made Raju's heart squeeze with pleasure when he saw his daughter in them.



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He went out to wait by the car. He could hear the murmur of voices as May-dum talked with the teacher, and then the shrill sounds of the children as they were put through their paces in front of their audience: spelling, geography. In Kannada and in English. And finally their mathematical tables, in English, recited in a monotone: *Vun-toojh-a-too, vun-theejh-a-thee, vun-fojh-a-fo.*

May-dum followed him out fifteen minutes later, her face pensive. Her voice, though, was brisk. "I have paid your daughter's school fees for the entire year," she said. "In return, the teacher should provide her with books, two sets of uniforms, pencils. Please see that she does do all of that. Let me know if she doesn't."

"She will," Raju said. "She is a good woman. A good teacher." After a pause he said awkwardly, "May-dum, thank you so much for this. It is a great kindness on your part."

"It's nothing," she said. "I am happy to do it. Now, Raju, do I get to meet your wife?"

He grinned and held the door open. "Yes, May-dum."

The visit was as he had hoped it would be. She didn't let him down. From the time the car stopped outside his house, he knew. It was written in the manner of her walk, her look of interest, her polite and gentle words to his father, who was waiting at the door. Her performance was in some oblique way a reciprocation—for all the times he had anticipated her movements and moved in concert with her expectations. Now she seemed to be doing the same for him.

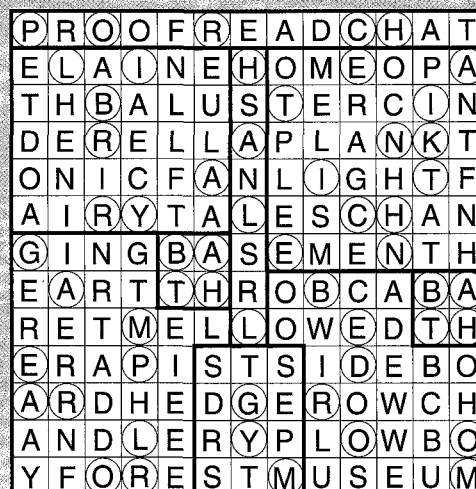
He watched his father usher her into their house. She paused at the door and, respectfully, slipped off her shoes.

"May-dum, you don't have to do that!"

"That's all right," she said.

Raju was later glad that his father had seamlessly taken charge. He watched May-dum being escorted to a bench inside, where she sat down. He watched her join her palms in greeting to his mother and his wife, and then make animated, interested conversation with his parents as though they were acquaint-

## ANSWERS TO THE NOVEMBER PUZZLER

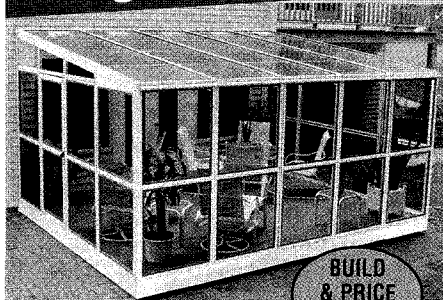


### "Floor Plan"

*The flat includes* PORCH, LIBRARY, HALL, EAT-IN KITCHEN, GAME PARLOR, GYM, BEDROOM, and two BATHS. Across: 1. PROOF + READ 2. CHAT + ELAINE 3. HOME + O + PATH 4. B(A)LUSTER 5. CINDERELLA (anag.) 6. PLANK + TONIC 7. F(AN)LIGHT 8. FAIRY TALES (anag.) 9. C + HANCING 10. BASEMEN + T 11. HEART(T)H + ROB 12. CA(BARE)T 13. M(ELL)OWED 14. THERAPIST (anag.) 15. SIDEBORD (sighed + bored homophone) 16. H(EDGER)OW 17. C(HANDLE)RY 18. P + LOWBOY 19. FOREST (anag.) 20. M(USE)UM  
Keywords: A. PORT(RAY)AL B. FURNACE C. P(OL)ASTER D. RE(SIDE)NTS E. THROWN (homophone) F. L + ATTIC + E G. NEED + LE H. OFF + ICE I. D + USTED J. S(WALL)OW K. F + LASHING L. COMMOD(OR)E M. BANDAGE (anag.) N. HEATH (hidden) O. TOUPEE (two + pay homophone) P. BAN(SHE)E

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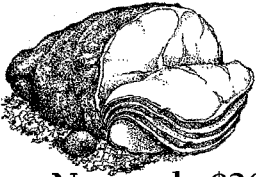
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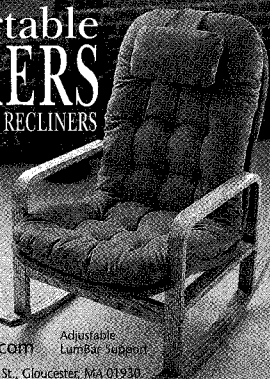
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tances she might meet at the Club. He felt his cheeks burn as May-dum praised him to his family. His wife vanished into the kitchen, presumably to re-emerge with refreshments, but she never did. Raju went in after her and found her waiting there nervously, a hot tumbler of coffee prepared and a plate with the sweet and the savory ready to serve.

"Go on," he muttered to her.

"No, you do it," she whispered back, shaking her head.

"Don't be silly," he said, but he saw that she really was too shy. So, in a facsimile of the tray that Rosa, the cook, used, he picked up a metal plate, placed the food and coffee on it, and took it out.

"Oh, so much trouble!" his May-dum said. "Really, you shouldn't have."

"No, no, please eat," they murmured.

Raju's mother, with a feeling of duty done, joined her daughter-in-law in the kitchen with great relief. Raju could see them peeping at May-dum from behind the curtain that hung in front of the door. So it was Raju's father who chatted with May-dum: Yes, it was a nice little house, two rooms and a kitchen for the six of them, but the rents were too high and increasing every year. Their landlord lived next door, and had built two more houses just like this down the road. He was a lucky man, with great foresight, to have bought this land when it was cheap. Perhaps someday Raju would be able to do something similar. Already, in this one year of his employment, they had been able to acquire a radio and a black-and-white TV. They were grateful, deeply grateful. He didn't mention that the house had been painted this clean, bright pink just a week ago, or that this impromptu living room was usually cluttered with the mess of living, now shoved into the room next door. Now, in addition to two benches, it had just the pink walls, clean curtains, the *puja* altar, and the TV.

Raju watched May-dum eat. She finished all her coffee, and ate enough of the sweet and the savory to indicate that it was to her taste, not beneath her at all. She praised the food, and Raju could hear his wife giggling with pleasure in the kitchen.

When they finally stepped outside,

Raju could see that word had spread. The road was filled with neighbors, all watching him, May-dum, and the car with unabashed curiosity. May-dum slipped on her shoes and said her good-byes to his family, pausing outside the car instead of climbing in immediately. With every eye upon them, she exchanged a few pleasant words with him with a casual air that provoked his neighbors to ask, even a week after the visit, "So, what did she say to you then?" To which Raju would shrug and say, "Nothing special." And that impressed them even more.

On the drive back into the city they continued to chat about his family. May-dum praised his home and his parents, and Raju filled her in on his sister and their plans for her marriage. He found himself talking easily, and was surprised that he hadn't really ventured to earlier.

"If you need any assistance with your sister's wedding, please speak to me about it."

"I will, May-dum."

"And please do see to it that your daughter's schoolteacher provides all the things that she has promised ..."

Raju nodded. He would do that. He turned the car in to the Club. He wanted to thank May-dum again for all her kindness, and also for the courtesy of her visit, but her attention was suddenly distracted.

"Saroj! ... Raju, stop the car."

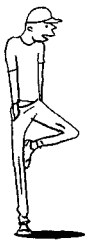
May-dum's friend looked at her elegant dress in surprise as she got out of the car. "Oh, my! Look at you! Where have you been?"

"Visiting," May-dum said.

He watched her for a minute, walking away toward the main clubhouse, one arm linked loosely around her friend's and listening appreciatively to some anecdote. Then Raju-once-Rangappa climbed back into his seat behind the wheel, shifted into first gear, and swung the car slowly around the flowered lawns and up to the parking lot, where all the drivers waited until they were summoned. ▀

*Lavanya Sankaran lives in Bangalore, India. Her first book, a collection of short stories that includes "The Red Carpet," will be published next fall.*





## THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

### Gift Array

In the spirit of the season, your unstinting puzzle makers have put together an array of gifts. The gifts are labeled, in a way, by the ten unclued entries in the grid. Each of ten clue answers is one letter too short for its space in the grid and must be entered with a gap before, after, or somewhere within the answer. The otherwise empty boxes will each be filled by a letter from a crossing gift label. When read in order column by column from left to right, these bits will display a self-descriptive phrase. Eight clue answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 177.

#### ACROSS

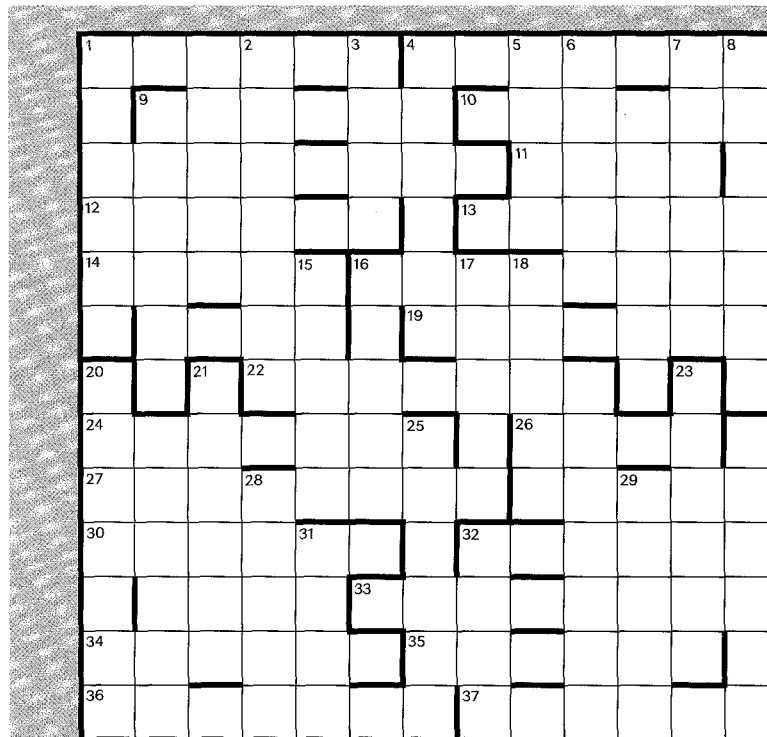
1. Vocal sign traps constituent
4. Jazz legend, upon being embraced by jerk
9. Goal of some programmers: understanding poet
10. Greater number of people's conventions
11. Way of moving entire audience when speaking
12. Problem with hearing that thing conveyed by name in an elevator
13. Officer material needed for brass
14. Clear daughter of Lady Bird with Democrat
19. Publicly ridicule invalid with ring in nose
22. People in general cotton to auditors in Oregon town
24. Bushes embraced by Plaza leaseholders
26. Cruise, after a bit
27. Entertainer Gibson picking up instrument
30. Member-owned store returned hot dog
32. Fire back in low Mediterranean land
33. Desperate, opening random number generator? (*hyphenated*)
34. Slow pitch taken by Cincinnati player

35. Tea urn changed character
36. Attempted carrying two pianos, and stumbled
37. Sound a warning about operation for nursery-rhyme figure (*two words*)

#### DOWN

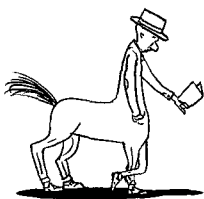
1. Sweet-talk one of the Little Women into spinning lace
2. Top-level routine, one with me pocketing \$1,000 (*hyphenated*)
3. Neckwear from exotic isle
4. Maintaining denial, bribe investigator?
5. One way to get a meal in African country
6. Conservative criticizes gambling game
7. Shooting star's hand out on the other hand
8. Old Saxon feeds birds
9. Fall well within interpretation of "a nut"
15. Scheduled tenor performance by two
16. New rug's a honey
17. Last Friday in Alabama
18. Give away soup veggie to those attending
20. Drive into split fortification
21. Have success with one wearing sullen look (*two words*)
23. Host's oddly overlooked red mackerel
25. Support company in broadcast
28. Dupe about love in melodrama
29. Back in Nigeria, zero money from central Africa
31. Koi do a lot of complaining
32. Organized crime gang holding a town in Utah

*Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit [www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm](http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm) or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.*



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## WORD FUGITIVES

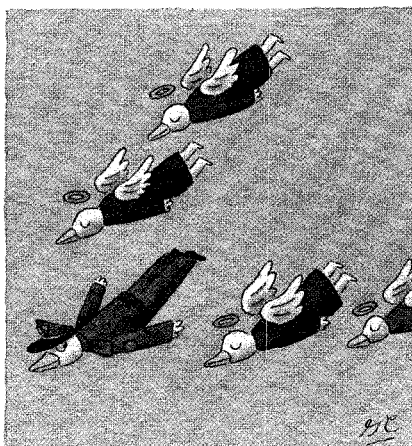
by BARBARA WALLRAFF

In the July/August issue we asked for “a word to denote the tendency of traffic to cluster around and behind highway patrol cars on rural interstates because no one dares to pass the trooper vehicle.” Michael Slancik, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, responded, “When I look in the rearview mirror of my patrol car and see that traffic cluster, I, like most of us ‘on the job,’ refer to it as *V’d up*. Some of us are also goose hunters and use the term for geese flying in V-formation.” Gerard Farrell, of Navasota, Texas, wrote, “I can’t speak to the drivers’ tendencies, but in this state we refer to the police vehicle itself as a *rolling roadblock*.” Alan Fryar, of Lexington, Kentucky, had it the other way around, though. He wrote, “My cousin, a former Kentucky state policeman, referred to the tendency of traffic to stagnate behind him on I-75 as a *rolling roadblock*.”

Jim Reid, of Guelph, Ontario, wrote, “As coincidence would have it, on my way to buy *The Atlantic* I found myself suddenly braking with a string of other cars as a police cruiser appeared from a dirt side road. It then held us grimly at the speed limit. *Skidlock* describes the immediate response to a police car.” And Mark Penney, of West Lafayette, Indiana, says that in the environs of the Indianapolis 500, “for obvious reasons we refer to this as the *pace-car phenomenon*.”

I loved the word that Sam P. Allen, of Toledo, Ohio, and Naples, Florida, submitted to describe “the human condition that prevents motorists from passing a police patrol car”: *arrestlessness*. As for the people who hang back behind a patrol car, a few readers designated them *road worriers*. A highly popular submission was *cruiser control*. Patricia Chu, of Houston, Texas, suggested giving new meaning to the term *ticketless travel*. And Jerome Kamer, of Los Angeles, thought of *slowest common speedometer*. Alas, those terms don’t do the job requested: describing the tendency.

One that does was submitted by several people, including Kurt Sauer, of Bethesda, Maryland, who said he learned it from listening to police officers when he worked as a paramedic, and Frank Williams, of Tempe, Arizona, who learned it from a former director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety. But Dan Schechter, of Los Alamitos, California, explained it best and so takes top honors. Schechter wrote, “Some California Highway Patrol officers call the phenomenon the *halo effect*. The term has a double meaning: the drivers suddenly behave like angels, and the angels form an annoying halo around the patrol car.”



Also sought was a word for the befuddlement that sets in as teachers grade papers. Laura Zlogar, of River Falls, Wisconsin, wrote, “As a college English teacher for thirty years, I often find myself questioning basic facts and having to check the spelling of perfectly common words after hours of exposure to the confused states of mind reflected in students’ writing. I call this malady *temporary inanity*.” Deborah Carter, of Walkersville, Maryland, wrote, “I’m a teacher too, and I’ve always thought of this phenomenon as *wisdumb*.”

Anutosh Moitra, of Sammamish, Washington, suggested *amissgivings*; Eunice Van Loon, of Biloxi, Mississippi,

*bogmindling*; Jim Lemon, of Gladesville, New South Wales, Australia, *contaminotion*; Lisa Bergtraum, of New York City, *errattled*; C. Bernard Barfoot, of Alexandria, Virginia, *nonsensery overload*; Doug and Kay Overbey, of Maryville, Tennessee, *numbleminded*; and Carol DeMoranville, of Steward, Illinois, *righter’s block*. Various people suggested *factigue*, *examnesia*, and *misleducation*.

And taking top honors here is Tom Dorman, of Sedro-Woolley, Washington, who wrote, “As a high school teacher, I can sympathize. My ninth-graders have recently convinced me that the Norman Conquest took place in 1951, that Samson and Goliath had a torrid affair (don’t tell the school board), and that *car pedium* means ‘seize your movement.’ Correct tests like this late into the night to meet your grade deadline and you, too, will feel *doubt-witted* by your students.”

Now MARC BURCKHARDT, of Austin, Texas, writes, “I’d love to have a term for those people who leave long, rambling messages on answering machines and then rattle off their phone numbers at lightning speed in the last second, forcing you to repeat the entire message to get the all-important digits.”

And SUSAN COCKRELL, of Holden, Maine, writes, “My husband and I are in search of a word for the fear of throwing a party and having no one show up.”

Send words that meet Marc Burckhardt’s or Susan Cockrell’s needs to *Word Fugitives*, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the *Word Fugitives* page on our Web site, at [www.theatlantic.com/fugitives](http://www.theatlantic.com/fugitives). Submissions must be received by December 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of *Word Fugitives* and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent *The Language Police*, by Diane Ravitch; *The Boy Who Loved Windows*, by Patricia Stacey; and *Monster of God*, by David Quammen.

GREG CLARKE

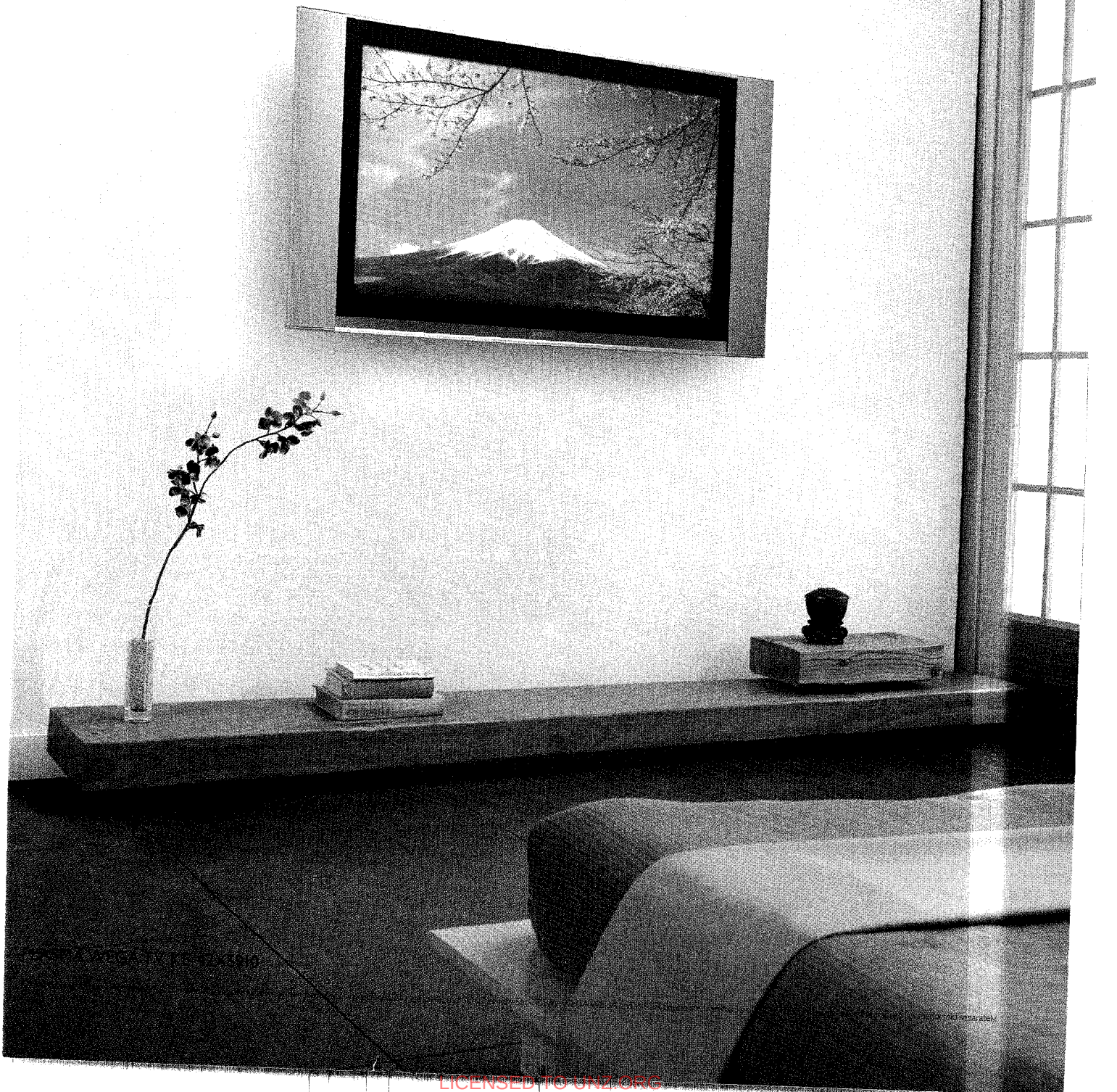


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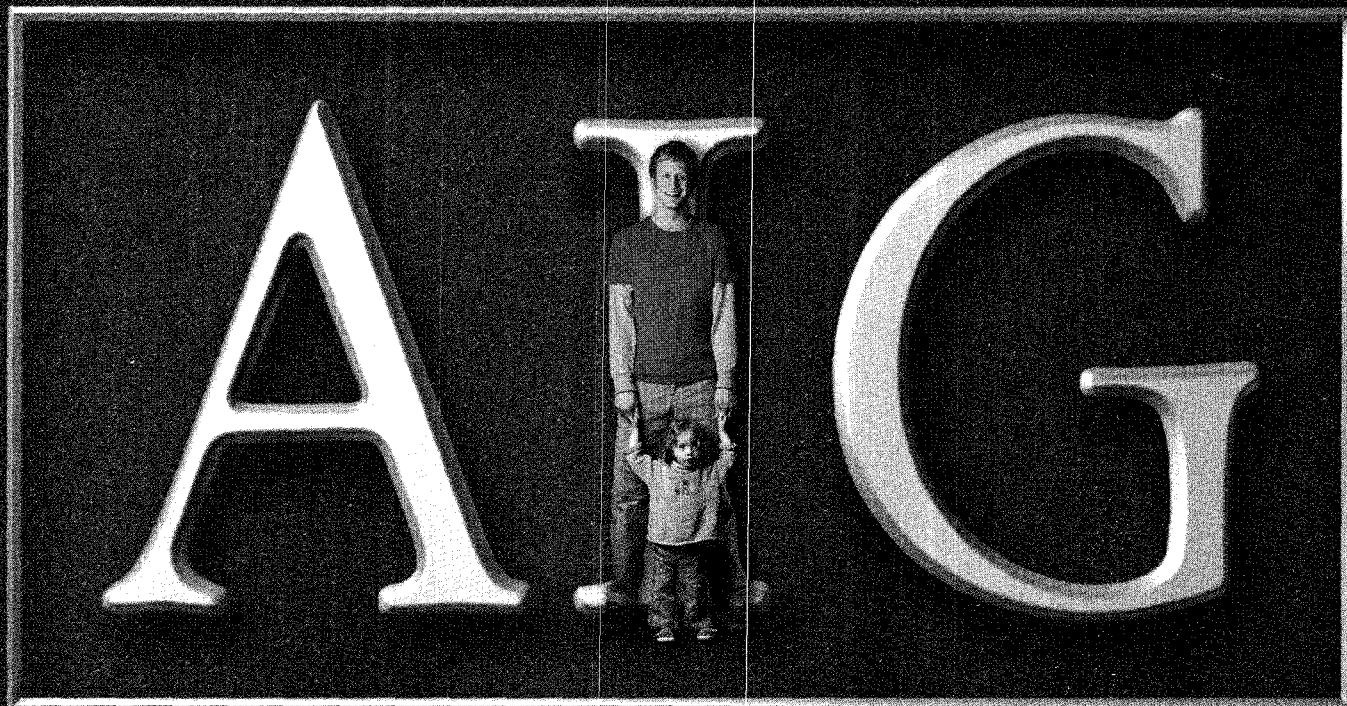
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